SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 381. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 18TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 381.] For the Week ending April 18th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

THE SORCERESS.

THE *calzada principal* in La Barca runs a meandering course easterly through the town to the *garita*. The houses on each side are the usual Mexican type, the more pretentious of some others of adobe, with barred windows and heavily doored *zaguan*, where the idle porter sits lazily, incessantly rolling and smoking his *cigarillo*, arousing himself sufficiently at times to salute a passer-by or to answer a question, and relapsing at once into his former dreary condition. Children imperfectly clothed play solemnly in the gutter; their dark-brown bodies, shining dully through the incrusting dirt, are proof against the darkening effect of the sun's rays; a solitary *lagartija* clings lizard-like to the kerb and feebly resists a boy's effort to goad him into action. The *sereno* leans sleepily against a corner in the shade, loosely holding his carbine, and muses on the unhappy lot of a policeman forced to keep up a semblance of watchfulness.

Suddenly, as a woman's figure appears in the street, there is a chorus of childish feet as they disappear panting with fright, in a dozen different directions. The porters, stirred into action, hurriedly close the doors and piously whisper an *ave*, the *sereno* draws himself erect, furtively crosses himself, and murmurs "*La bruja! Dois me guarde!*" as the woman passes. She moves quickly down the street, looking neither to the right nor to the left passing the *garita* where the solitary customs official likewise crosses himself and asks divine protection from the wiles of the sorceress.

Nevertheless, he follows the sinuous, graceful movement of the young woman and notes the perfection of face and figure, which appeals to him in spite of his persuasion that her beauty is of origin diabolic, and lent by Lucifer himself to snare men's souls. She wore a piece of dark green stuff, folded around her hips, and falling to the ankle; a jacket of red gauze clothed the upper part of her person, veiling her bosom, upon which lay a chain of gold in the form of a serpent. Her black hair, parted at the forehead and drawn back in two splendid tresses, intensified the pure white of her brow; her eyes, shaded by long lashes, were the greenish-black of obsidian. Continuing her walk to a small adobe house some hundred yards beyond the gate, she disappeared within the doorway. The customs official gave a sigh of relief and returned to his desk.

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Once within the house, she lost her firmness of bearing, tottered to the centre of the room, and sank in a heap on the rush mat. Her form suddenly grew rigid, her face took on the grey pallor of death; the eyes became set, and stared fixedly at the wall opposite; the golden serpent on her bosom seemed in the half light of the dying fire to writhe and twist, instinct with life.

At the fire sat a little shrivelled-up old man, brown and wrinkled, stirring with skinny claw the contents of an *olla*. Of her entrance he had taken no notice, continuing his employment as if waiting for her to speak. At length he looked round and sprang to his feet; a pallor almost as deep as her own overspread his face. "Maria!" he whispered; "Maria!" Meeting with no response, he hastily moved to the door, barred it, and, returning to his place by the fire, crouched down and shrouded his face in his arms.

Soon the woman's body lost its rigidity, her eyes turned towards the doubled-up figure of the old man and shone with such a basilisk glare that he moved uneasily; the eyelids drooped, and she sank back upon the floor apparently asleep: her respiration at first harsh and laboured, became quiet and regular.

The old man now raised his head for the first time, and fixed his bright, beady eyes on the woman's face.

"A prophecy," he said, "a prophecy! Let the high priest of the gods know their will!"

As if in response, the woman began an inarticulate murmur. Soon her voice rose to distinctness:

"The darkness of earth is in the temple; the altar of the fire-god is black with ashes, the serpent lies dead before Quetzalcoatl; the grinning skulls at the feet of Xipetotec mock the power that is gone forever; the snake-skin drum is beat in vain; the victim is slain; the sound of thunder fills the temple, the priests fall dead, and the foot of the white man desecrates the house of the gods."

Her voice fell, and, with a fluttering sigh, she awoke. The light of expectancy which had illuminated the old man's face gradually died out as the woman's words fell on his ears, and, at their conclusion, he seemed shrunken to half his size.

"'Tis false!" he said—"false! The power of the gods can never fail. For seven years have we awaited

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the sign, and to-morrow Xipe-totec, gladdened once more by the sight of blood on the sacrificial stone, will make answer to his children's prayers. Did you see the white stranger again to-day, Maria?" he asked.

"Yes; I have but now left him."

"And he will be in the *barranquilla* to-morrow at sunset?"

The woman's voice faltered as she answered: "Yes; if——"

"If!" hastily returned the old man; "if? What does this mean?"

"He will come if I send him word, but—but I cannot—oh, *papa mio*, don't ask it. Forego the sacrifice to Xipe-totec, and content the people with the sacred mask-dances."

He looked at her with astonishment: "Seven years have we waited, and the daughter of El Viejito, the high priest, asks that the sacrifice be omitted! What woman's whim is this?" he said fiercely. "Why should the god, upon whose awful power we must depend, be denied his due?"

"He loves me, father."

"Loves you! And if he did not, could he ever be lured within the reach of the Nagual priesthood? Suppose he does, he will pay the penalty of his folly."

The woman rose to her feet. "He shall not," she said firmly; "for I love him, and no priestly knife shall ever harm him. At first, I believed all you had taught me; believed that my duty to the gods made all things good, no matter how cruel and horrible they otherwise seem. But now I know better. The ancient religion shall die out and the worshippers perish from off the face of the earth ere harm shall come to him I love."

The fierce glitter in the old man's eyes gave way to a look of crafty cunning. "Well, well! so be it," he said; "the sacred dances must answer."

* * * * *

When the "Golden Ass"—as his La Barca neighbours unpleasantly called him—developed a taste for mural decorations, his case was a most serious one; the *casa pintada* was the result, and a most marvellous one it is. His zeal in the cause of art was intense, but not discriminating: primary colours alone seemed to fill the requirements; minor details of perspective, truth to nature, and the like, were absorbed in a wild hunger for colour, and plenty of it. Impossible landscapes and oddly constructed animals ran riot on the walls.

He is long since dead; but his house remains and made very comfortable engineering headquarters. In one of the least violent rooms, overlooking the miniature fountain in the *patio*, the engineer in charge, Vincent Colby, had his office. He was a good type of the English engineer; tall and well-built, he gave the impression of staying qualities rather than of muscular power. The warmth of a tropical sun had but slightly deepened a naturally fair complexion; his dark hair and good eyes, with a softness of intonation and engaging manner, stamped him at once with the Mexicans as *muy simpatico*, and revealed to them the possibility that all might not be *barbaros*, an impression unfortunately yet not unnaturally prevalent.

Just now Vincent was in an unpleasant frame of mind, and his musings ran somewhat as follows: "I may be an idiot, but I can't help it. Idiocy may be congenital or acquired—mine must be acquired, for, up-to-date, I've been reasonably conventional. The mater will rave, I know, when I take home a native wife; the sisters will make matters unpleasant for a day or two; and the governor will probably cut up rather rough. But I'm suited, they will have to be; if a man can't make his own choice when it comes to marrying, when can he? I've made mine—if she'll give me an answer on the seventh—why not the sixth or eighth, I don't know. I've asked her a dozen times in the last ten days, but it is always the same: she neither says yes nor no. It can't be coquetry, for she smiles sadly, yet with a wistful look which can mean but one thing."

Here a rattle of hoofs in the *patio* interrupted him, and he looked out to see the company's doctor dismount.

"Hello, doctor," he called out, "come in here; I want to talk to you. There's not a soul about the place, and I'm too lazy or nervous to work. Throw your saddle-bags over there on the table and have a drop of toddy. No? You don't usually let a good thing go by. What's up? Patients dying or getting well, or have you been rowing it again with the *padre* at Penjamo, because you differ as to the use of water? You're all wrong. Be satisfied to cure the poor beggars without lecturing them on the advantages of an occasional bath. To clean them is so radical a measure that you'll be run out of the country as a pernicious foreigner attempting to demolish a most cherished idea."

The doctor made no reply.

"Well, out with it. You needn't look at me like that."

"Vince, we've known each other as boys and men for a good many years——"

"All right; you always begin with gentle boyhood days when you've anything particularly unpleasant to say. But I suppose I must submit. I don't know what's up, but if it's serious as you look, old man, it's pretty bad."

"It's serious or not, as you choose to make it," answered the doctor. "An ambition to acquire the Mixe language may be a laudable one; folklore, ancient religion, and all that sort of rubbish learned on the spot are a kind of relief in this hot, dusty hole, though I don't care for it myself. Even Nagualism and other high-class sorcery may be amusing to you, if not to me. But when you get spoony on the sorceress herself, it's time for some one to open your eyes."

"Sorceress!" responded the other. "What rot you are talking. That sort of thing is played out in these days."

"I tell you it isn't played out," rejoined the doctor; "the natives keep it dark and say there's nothing in it, but half the Indians in this town hold to the old faith, and every time a child is baptised, they set up a little incantation business on the sly, and do the trick over again in their own way, with an extra curse or two on the white man and his god. I scared the story out of old Sebastiano, and got the whole programme. The Eleusinian mysteries aren't in it with this accursed Nagualism, which includes human sacrifices and other pleasant little ceremonies which, though no doubt highly gratifying to the worshippers, must be somewhat unpleasant to the victim, I fancy. El Viejito is the high priest, and Maria Condelaria is his daughter. They are a dangerous, fanatical lot, and if you'll take my advice, you'll leave them alone. They bitterly hate the whole white race, and an offering from it is not only an act distinctly pleasant in itself, but is a religious duty as well. The government has only been partly successful in keeping it down. They practise their devilish rites once too often, and some one disappears."

To hear one's best beloved spoken of as a sorceress, and as one to whom wading in human gore was a usual and agreeable employment, was, to say the least,

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irritating; but the doctor's earnestness and evident belief in what he had said roused in Vincent a strong desire to laugh.

"You've been imposed upon, old man," he said. "Haven't you learned yet that the one delight of the native is to impose on the credulous with creepy stories? Moreover, you have allowed yourself to listen to gossip about the woman whom I intend to marry."

"Marry! My God!"

"Yes, marry—if she'll have me. I intended speaking of it when you commenced with your infernal nonsense. It's my affair anyhow, and if I'm satisfied, you can't complain."

To be told, even indirectly, to mind one's own business is particularly hard when one has tried to do a friend a kindness, so the doctor left the room offended at the manner in which his efforts had been received.

* * * * *

The sun was low in the west on the following afternoon when the doctor rode into the *patio* of the *casa pintada*. His progress through the town had been delayed.

A nameless fear had oppressed him and could not be shaken off. He went hastily to Vincent's room, but found it vacant. He was about to call a servant and inquire as to the whereabouts of his friend, when he saw a small scrap of paper on the floor. Idly picking it up, he read what aroused again his fears of the previous evening. In green ink, on paper none too clean, with v's and b's used interchangeably and double ll doing service for y, was written:

"Meet me in the Barranquilla de Hornos at sunset.—Maria."

Hastily calling for Julio, he was told Vincent had left at five. Julio had been ordered to unsaddle his own horse as his services would not be required. Returning to his room, the doctor consoled himself with the idea that although a tryst ten miles away was unusual, danger was not necessarily impending; the roads were fairly free from bad characters, and a lonesome ride was probably the worst to be expected.

He had brought himself to this state of mind when a woman staggered into the room.

"Save him! Save him, doctor!" she cried! "save him!"

Her hair fell in a tangled mass about her face, her clothing was torn and disarranged, and her wrists cut and bleeding. He recognised Maria, but her presence made the meaning of what he had read unintelligible.

"I refused to send for him," she continued hastily, "so they bound me in the *casita* and sent him a message in my name. They left me powerless, as they supposed, but I escaped."

"They? Who are they?"

"The priests of the Nagual; they who cling to the old faith, and who would sacrifice on their altar the man I love. Ah! doctor, make haste or we shall be too late; an hour at most is all we have."

Ordering Julio to follow him with the horses, the doctor made his way to the barracks.

Don Juan Gomez, captain in the Fourth, was a model cavalry officer and a warm friend of the engineer. The doctor had scarcely commenced his story, when Don Juan gave a brief order to his orderly at the door. A bugle call rang out, a clatter of hoofs on the pavement and the rattle of sabre and carbine in answer gave proof of the discipline of the troop. A sergeant entered and saluted.

"Listo, señor! A caballo, doctor!"

With Maria as guide, they dashed out into the night. In the service of a friend, Juan Gomez spared neither man nor beast. The breath of the horses came hard and fast, and spur was freely used before Maria said: "The entrance is between the two boulders to the right of the stunted pine."

* * * * *

Sunset found Vincent in the *barranquilla*. He had given no thought to the strangeness of such a place of meeting; he was to see again the woman he loved, and that was sufficient. No idea of danger had presented itself. Strong and well armed, he was confident of his ability to take care of himself. The place was dark and dismal, and he was too absorbed in his own fancies to note even casually his surroundings.

The trail had narrowed to barely a sufficient width for his horse, when he saw three men approaching on foot. They stood aside as he came up, and, as he attempted to pass, one seized him by the foot and threw him out of the saddle. Before he recovered from the shock, he was pinioned, blindfolded and helpless. He felt himself lifted up, carried some little distance, and placed on the ground again.

He remained thus for an hour or more, when the bandage was removed from his eyes. He had felt no especial fear at his treatment, believing it to be a question of a small ransom and liberty as soon as he could communicate with his friends. He opened his eyes, and with the first glance round, all idea of liberty by purchase departed at once. As his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, he saw he was in a cave-temple. On his right was a wooden idol, standing on a low stool. It was black and shining, as if charred and polished; its look was grim, and it had a wrinkled forehead, and broad, staring eyes. He had read of the Black King, but now saw himself face to face with him. On the left was a coiled serpent, with head erect, shining eyes of jet, and fancifully painted scales, which he knew represented Quetzalcoatl. Immediately before him stood Xipe-totec, "the flayer of men," the representative of all that was vile and horrible in the hideous cult whose victim he was. In front of the idol stood the sacrificial stone, humped in the centre, the better to present to the knife the chest of the victim.

His heart sank within him as he read his awful position in the signs around him. The wealth of the world would not save his life from the fanatical faithful of the Nagual sect. But last night he had declared the practice of their rites obsolete; now he had full proof of his error, and was about to pay the penalty.

By this time the cavern had filled with people. Half-naked priests began a low chant in a minor key, circling in front of the idols and swinging terra-cotta censers, from which were emitted the pungent fumes of copal.

The movement became faster, their voices rose in their excitement, while, in their frenzy, they gashed themselves with knives until the blood flowed freely. Seizing Vincent, they placed him, face upward, on the sacrificial stone.

The high priest stepped forward to the side of the victim. Raising his knife of green obsidian above his head, he began: "Xipe-totec, the all powerful——"

A woman's shriek rang out, a flying form reached the altar as the knife descended, and a roar of musketry reverberated through the cavern.

A woman lay dead at the side of the sacrificial stone, on which rested the body of a man, an obsidian knife driven home in his heart.

Edwin Hall Warner.

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The Wooing of Madeleine

Lucien Barthelemy was what the world commonly calls an eccentric man. While he didn't affect to despise ordinary people, yet he seemed to have no desire to mingle with them, no doubt considering himself better company. Said one of his friends of him:

"I can't exactly say that his presence among us is depressing, yet the truth is we don't amuse ourselves so much when he is with us. He weighs upon our spirits. Not that he says anything unpleasant, far from it; but still, in spite of efforts to the contrary, we are not quite ourselves when Lucien is with us. His wine is always two-thirds water, he orders only one dish, he doesn't use tobacco in any form, he has an aversion to sport—doesn't want to kill anything, he says.

"Nevertheless, he is not a bad fellow. He can laugh when he chooses, especially when there are any children about. He prefers their society; he puts himself on their level.

"Lack of confidence in himself? Oh, no, he has passed his medical examination, he has a wonderful knowledge of books, and always has a book thrust into some one of his pockets; but he never reads when in company, for he is a deep student of human nature, so much so that he seems to have been acquainted with everyone in the world when he came into it, and be merely meeting you again when you are first presented to him, for without any useless preliminaries he at once chooses a topic of conversation which is interesting to you.

"I can't tell you," continued this friend, "what Lucien's religion is. He never goes to church, and yet he and the parson are the best of friends. Only once was he ever at church. It was a mournful occasion, the death of his mother. Everyone was in tears excepting Lucien, yet he loved his mother dearly. In the last year of her life she had not been able to walk. Lucien had carried her about in the open air for hours every day.

"You know he is superbly built, and has the strength of a giant, and had amused her as she lay in his arms like a child by telling her fairy and other stories with a grace and delicate pathos that would have made a publisher's fortune if the stories could have been taken down by a stenographer. At times she would fall asleep. Then he would lay her down on a bench, sit down beside her, and draw forth the ever present-book.

"His mother was a woman of strong character, and at her request her son gave her due notice of approaching death. The entire night preceding her dissolution Lucien sat alone by her bedside. This was as she desired. Everyone else was sent to bed.

"I have often asked myself what they talked about on that last night, which must have been a long one, and at the end of which Mrs. Barthelemy passed away gently, quietly, peacefully, without a pain or a pang, her son's hand clasped in hers. No; the parson was not called in, but he had dined with Lucien the day previous at the bedside of the sick woman. When, a few weeks later, I spoke to Lucien in admiration of this beautiful passing away of his mother, he replied in a low voice:

"'Everyone can die in the same way; all that is necessary is to give five minutes' thought to death every day of one's life.'

"'And do you think that we shall meet again?' I asked.

"'There can be no doubt of it,' he replied.

"'Where? How? In what form?' I queried.

"'I don't know,' was his answer, 'and the reason why I don't know is because it is no affair of mine.'

"'Then why do you affirm that we shall meet again?'

"'Because I know we shall,' he said calmly."

Lucien was one of those men who, while not arguing to the point, are none the less convincing.

"Was it at all surprising then," continued this friend of Barthelemy's, "that Lucien should have peculiar notions on the subject of marriage? I think not. Anyhow, he did have such notions. I have it from his own lips. Said he to me one day:

"'I want to impress upon your mind firmly that I am not one of those who think that in a civilisation like ours perpetual bonds should be laid upon a human being; no matter with what solemnity the contract may have been entered into. Fate has not the power to modify the past, and man has no right to speak for the future.

"'Let signatures support what they are set under in commercial transactions; but this cannot be so in moral compacts, subject as they are both to the variability of

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our ideas and our feelings. These compacts must be purely voluntary, and it is the soul's inalienable right to take possession of itself again when it discovers that either under duress or undue influence it surrendered unwisely.

"'Marriage is purely a moral compact into which the man, generally speaking, goes knowingly, with full knowledge of what he is doing, but the woman gropingly, blindly. In my opinion, the man alone is entitled to be called a contracting party.

"'When once the marriage has been solemnised,' continued Lucien, 'it devolves upon the man by every possible means to win over to him and incorporate into his existence this outside party of whom he often gets possession by surprise, by ruse, by deceit; and his own fault is it if he fails to accomplish this, for, having had perfect liberty to do so, he should, before asking her to become his wife, have made a close study of the young girl and given her up if he deemed her unfit for or unworthy of him.

"'Let us hope that the time is close at hand when fathers and mothers will prepare their children differently for marriage, so that the contracting parties will know beforehand what a magnificent partnership they have it in their power to enter into by simply pronouncing the word "Yes."

"'Civilisation, I grieve to say, has not gone as far as this. It will be necessary for women to learn many things which will be kept from them a long time yet. There will be no true marriages until choice on the part of both shall be absolutely free, and there shall be full and complete knowledge in both of reciprocal rights and duties. Until that day comes there is but one court competent to pass upon this question, and that is conscience.'"

Surely no one will wonder at it when told that Lucien Barthelemy's forty-fifth birthday found him still unmarried. Physically, Lucien was in the very bloom of manhood, his broad shoulders carrying a magnificent head, with a great wealth of curly brown hair thrown boldly back, while a full beard of a lighter tone ill concealed the placidity and sweetness of his smile.

His forehead indicated spirituality as his straight eyebrows denoted firmness, energy, obduracy, if necessary, in opinions as in actions; while his clear blue eyes beamed with mingled intelligence and kindness. This handsome face was set upon a chin of great beauty, which, like a pedestal, imparted an air of dignity and self-control to it, and held it up, so to speak, for the admiring and sympathetic glances of the looker-on to rest upon.

In spite of the few grey hairs which diligent search might have found in that thick fleece of brown, Lucien still looked the young man.

In studying his hands the skilled palm-reader would have discovered unmistakable signs pointing to that union of imagination and will of faith and reason, of love of the ideal and need of independence which is found in all men whose minds, whose consciences, whose souls are in open conflict with the world.

While yet in his forty-fifth year Lucien fell in love.

Largely from a sense of devotion to his mother's memory, Lucien had been accustomed from time to time to pay a visit to various old friends of hers, among them the Duclos, people in good circumstances and of considerable refinement. The daughter, Madeleine, when a mere child felt the personal charm of the "big gentleman," as she called Lucien, and play was abandoned and dolls hastily laid aside to enjoy the privilege of sitting at his feet.

Barthelemy had the power of holding enchained the attention of any listener. It was marvellous. His words had colouring, suppleness, strength, elasticity; they could be sombre, gay, luminous, solemn; as his voice delivered them they affected the audience like a Beethoven's symphony.

Lucien knew his power and delighted to exercise it. Upon no one was he more successful than upon Madeleine. The moment he opened his mouth she yielded to the fascination of his voice, sitting at his feet, with her glorious dark eyes riveted upon his face, as if a spell were upon her. There was manifestly a counter influence upon him, for his eyes never quitted her.

Madeleine felt the personal charm.

It was old Duclos' custom to adjourn to the garden when the weather was fair, in order to enjoy coffee and dessert in the open air, and here, with his magnificent head reaching almost to the roses above him, with the dark green of the bower sharpening the noble outlines of his face and heightening the almost womanlike delicacy of his colouring, Lucien, at Madeleine's request, was always ready to show the fertility of his fancy by inventing some quaint story in which everyday maidens and youths, fairy mothers, and obedient spirits were brought into delightful contingency. Madeleine never failed to reward the story-teller by setting half-a-dozen kisses upon his bearded cheek.

One evening as he wrapped his arm round this child and drew her towards him, he suddenly felt a deep blush mantling his face, and a strange clogging of his heart's action. Madeleine was no longer a child, she was a woman. Lucien's arm dropped by his side, and he drew away from her. He could not tell why, he only knew that he was all in a tremble, and for the first time

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in his life his mind grew dim and shadowy, and his words slipped away from him.

In a few moments he rose and hurried away on some pretence or other, slinking out of his friend's house with a feeling of shame that both bewildered and terrified him. But she was beside him, her soft voice was murmuring in his ear, her arm was about his neck, he could not escape her. No book was obstruse enough, no author profound enough, to stay her steps, to stop her at the threshold of his library.

She crossed it, she smiled upon him, she spoke to him in a voice of entrancing sweetness; she sat down; she made herself at home. He watched her, listened to her with mingled bliss and wonder. She was but the Madeleine of his imagination, but she was just as soft and gentle and lovable as the real Madeleine whom he had quitted in the bower of Duclos garden a few hours before.

Madeleine's parents were delighted with the discovery of Lucien's affection for the daughter. True, she was yet too young to marry; just verging, as she was, towards sixteen; but her beauty was unfolding like a flower, and while its steady increase carried joy to Lucien's heart it kept Madeleine's mother busy lengthening skirts and enlarging sleeves and corsages.

"But," laughed the mother, "Lucien is such a sensible man, so unlike other men. He can easily wait a year for our dear child."

Madeleine was not tall. At first glance one might have been inclined to use that vulgar but really technical term, dumpy. Very small and shapely hands and feet, black hair, naturally wavy, black eyebrows, almost meeting above the nose, which had the gentlest of upwards tilts; large eyes, gloriously deep and dark, with the bistre tone above them, and the pearl-tint below; cheeks rosy red and teeth as white as almonds—such was this child-woman.

Place some red roses in these black tresses, wrap a lace mantilla about that face, set a fan in motion in one of those hands, and drape that round but flexible form with a shortened skirt, and you would have an Andalusian.

Madeleine was the daughter of her mother. If you had gone far enough back, you would have found one of her ancestors among the builders of the Alhambra, possibly even breathing beneath its roof. It was rich blood, therefore, of the colour of the melted coral, which coursed through her veins. And yet a close observer would have noted the changes which the loss of the Southern sun had wrought in this transplanted type.

You would have an Andalusian.

The wedding-day came on apace. It so happened that a few weeks before the appointed day an Italian opera troupe began a series of performances in the town. Madeleine was passionately fond of music, and with her intended's knowledge and consent, in fact, sometimes in his company, she attended every representation.

Lucien noted how the singing stirred her very soul, and was gratified by the keen enjoyment she drew from it. The tenor singer, Angelo Liverino, a strikingly handsome young man, who walked the stage like an Apollo and sang with the deep feeling of an Orpheus, soon became the rage of the town.

Petted and *féted* by everyone, and entertained by the best families, he set a hundred hearts aflame on his triumphal course, but seemed to take no hurt himself until he met Madeleine. In an instant the warm souls flashed together, the two people of the south land met after long years of separation.

One evening, when Lucien entered the home of his affianced, he found Mrs. Duclos lying senseless on the floor and her husband kneeling beside her, himself but little this side of dementia. Madeleine had eloped with Angelo Liverino.

It had only struck nine when Lucien parted with Mr. and Mrs. Duclos, and yet it was past midnight when he presented himself at his apartments. Here were three whole hours absolutely cut out of his lifetime. During this time he had been dead to himself, and he only came back to life when his servant, in response to his knock, opened the door and called him by name. Then he remembered who he was and what had happened to him.

He staggered to a chair, and asked for water. He was burning up with thirst.

His servant begged for permission to summon a physician, but Lucien shook his head and directed him to go to bed. The man reluctantly obeyed after he had vainly tried to persuade his master to remove his clothes and go to rest first himself.

Nature is more merciful than men give her credit for. Like murderous blows, great agonies so dull sensibility that little pain is felt. The terrible hurt mercifully brings unconsciousness with it. Some sorrows are so heavy that the sufferer is crushed beneath the load. He cannot even cry out; a chill almost of death steals over

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him. He is dead, for real death could not be so horrible.

When Lucien's servant re-entered his room the next morning, he was startled to find his master sitting with his clothes on, just as he had left him. He had not stirred from the chair into which he had fallen upon his return home after those three hours of mad pursuit, and then, as the man drew the curtain aside and let the sun's rays into the room, he uttered a stifled cry of horror, for great flecks of grey streaked that glorious head of hair.

In a single night grief had wrought this devastation. In a few brief hours a speechless woe had set its ghastly finger-marks upon this bright page of humanity. Nor did despair stop there. In a few weeks the change was complete; that luxuriant growth of hair—crown of perfect manhood—was silvered to its very roots.

But gradually the paroxysm spent its force, and like came to cure like when Lucien looked upon the terrible woe now nested in that little home, and listened to the lamentations of that old couple so cruelly deserted.

In a few days letters come from Madeleine, both to her parents and to Lucien, announcing her marriage to Angelo, and promising to return home in a few months, when they had quieted down and had come to look upon her action in a calm and reasonable way, which, of course, was now impossible.

To Lucien she wrote as follows:

Oh, Lucien, dear master, will you ever be able to forgive your poor slave for thus deserting you? Ah, yes, I loved you; but I feared you, for, thought I, if his power is so great over me now, what will it be when I am his wife?

You know what a wild and wilful child I am. I could not bear to think of chains, even though my love for my master was so great. I trembled when I pictured myself your wife. My woman's soul longed to try its wings, not to have them tied. Dear master, you are not weak and mortal, you would not be led by a woman.

The world is so beautiful, and I have not seen it yet. Great and generous soul, bear with me. I could not be satisfied with being a listener to the wonderful things that happen to the maidens of your stories—I wanted to be one of the maidens myself.

I tired of watching others dancing and feasting. I wanted to dance and feast myself. Comfort dear mother and father, oh, beloved master, with the music of your voice and the look of your noble countenance, and grieve not for the loss of one who was not worthy of you.

Lucien read and re-read this strange letter hour after hour, day after day. It had a twofold influence upon him, alternately depressing and exciting him, but in the end the feeling that took possession of his soul was a deep and indescribable indignation.

To think that the woman whom he had loved with a devotion that went beyond thought should have been so ready to abandon him for such a vain and soulless creature, puffed up with the senseless admiration showered upon him by morbid-minded women. To think that this jack-a-dandy should have been so easily able to lead her away.

Even by his friends, Liverino was admitted to be stupid and vulgar, and yet she had found him sublime; she had fallen in love with this singing machine like a child with the soft tinkle of a music-box. She had found her ideal in this pretty-faced minstrel; she had given up all the world for him, relinquishing all other love for the love that an opera queen gets from the leading man. Faugh!

And yet, strange to say, resolve as Lucien might to curse this pretty child, he could not bring himself to it. The words died on his lips so softly that they seemed more like a blessing than a curse.

A hundred times he sat down and took up his pen to write, but the hot hate cooled ere it reached the quill's point. He could distil the venom of despised love, but he could not make it flow out in black and bitter lines.

Had she ever pledged herself to him? In spite of her seeming willingness, in spite of the solemn compact entered into for her by her parents, had she really been transferred to him? Had any ear heard the divine acquiescence when God's blessing had been invoked upon the betrothal?

"I was a man of forty-five," argued Lucien, "when I swore to cherish and protect her. For many years I had been a man of the world; I had complete knowledge of its social and moral responsibilities. I knew what I was doing. I was the only one betrothed."

But willing in the end as Lucien was to extend a full pardon to Madeleine, he could not bring himself to forgive Liverino, who had lured Madeleine away by making her believe that she should be his Juliet, his Rosina, his Desdemona, not in mimic show, not in pleasing counterfeit, but in glorious reality.

"I shall follow him and kill him!" exclaimed Barthelemy through his clenched teeth. "To let such a thief get away with his plunder would make me accessory after the fact."

A few weeks sufficed Lucien to put his affairs in order, to take the daughter's place and walk beside Mr. Duclos, as the old father, bowed in sorrow and despair, followed his wife's remains to their last resting place—for Mrs. Duclos had never raised her head after Madeleine's flight—and to execute his last will and testament, for Lucien realised to its fullest extent the risk he would take when he entered the land of the stiletto, bent upon executing a vengeance that must betray itself in every motion, in every glance.

It would be very possible that Angelo should know quite as well how to guard his plunder as he did to remove it from under the very eyes of the lover. And yet, how would he ever know that Lucien Barthelemy was standing in front of him, about to raise an avenging arm to strike him down with all the force of a thunderbolt?

His own mother would have had difficulty to see in this pale, smooth-faced, white-haired man, the specimen of glorious manhood she had left behind her. So long as Madeleine did not hear his voice, she, too, would never dream that this was the man she had so deeply wronged, so lightly abandoned.

She had only known the bearded face; she had no knowledge of the countenance that lay beneath the beard. His plan was, therefore, to follow boldly after the fugitives without meditating any further disguise than that which nature had provided for him.

But it proved to be no easy task to come upon a trace of them. Upon returning to Italy, Liverino had travelled under an assumed name, and a month had elapsed before Lucien was enabled to discover his whereabouts, but his zeal and intelligence triumphed at last.

Angelo and Madeleine were traced from Venice to Florence, from Florence to Rome, and from Rome to Naples. Here they disappeared so completely that Lucien was quite persuaded that they had left the city by water, probably taking passage for America.

By this time the new scenes and new faces, the glory of Italian skies, and the melody of the Italian tongue

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had begun to work a change in Lucien. Strange fate had led him into a land that was serving to aggravate rather than cure his malady, for at times, with a love that knew no bounds, he yearned for the dark-eyed child who had been snatched away from him, and who, now in his pilgrimage through this south land, would fit so delightfully in his poet's and scholar's heart.

While wandering about the streets one evening, peering into every face, measuring every form that passed him, he strolled into a wine shop and sat down at one of the tables, when suddenly a smothered cry of rage escaped his lips.

Angelo Liverino had entered the place in company with several friends and taken seats at another table. The hour was late. Angelo and his companions, although already inflamed with liquor, summoned the keeper of the wine shop and noisily demanded to be served at once. The man, apparently afraid lest the good name of his place should suffer from the outbreak of a midnight brawl, vainly endeavoured to quiet them, and consented at last to furnish them with wines.

In spite of the intreaties of the proprietor, the revellers went from bad to worse, and it seemed as if their wrangling must soon bring about a descent of the police agents. One Pietro, with inflamed visage and wild tongue, summoned Angelo to sing. Angelo refused, whereupon Pietro fell foul of him like a fiend.

In an instant the polished blade of Angelo's stiletto flashed in the light. The tumult was deafening. The roar of angry voices and the shuffling and stamping of feet mingled with the crash and rattle of overturned furniture. The tallest and sturdiest of the group, one Stephano, now threw himself upon Angelo, and after a brief struggle succeeded in wrenching the stiletto from his hand.

Fearing that blood was about to be shed, and being unwilling to be called as a witness to a midnight brawl, Lucien hastily retreated to a side-door with intent to escape, but a new outburst of violence from the brawlers caused him to look back.

Pietro had flung himself like a madman upon Stephano, who, to save himself from a blow of a heavy cane, struck out with the stiletto, and Pietro staggered back with a groan. The next instant the police burst into the place and made prisoners of the brawlers.

While glancing listlessly over the columns of a morning journal a suppressed cry of amazement escaped from Lucien's lips as his eyes fell upon the heading: "A Midnight Brawl ends Disastrously—Angelo Liverino Slays One of his Companions."

Like a flash of lightning the truth burst upon Lucien; Pietro had been killed by Angelo's dagger, and the singer's companions had charged him with the killing of Stephano.

For a moment or so Barthelemy was as if suddenly stricken blind and speechless, but as the light came back to him again and he found that he could use his tongue, he started up and whispered to himself: "Great Heavens! Madeleine is mine again!"

But as he uttered these words he felt the blood rush into his face, so that it seemed as if it must burn its way out. It was the blush of shame. For how could Madeleine be his again unless he stood by and allowed an innocent man to be convicted of another's crime and to be thrust into a felon's cell on perjured evidence?

No; he had been dazed, bewildered for a moment by a vision as lovely as that which Mephisto has conjured up for Faust; but it had faded the very next instant, and in its stead he saw the figure of a young woman in mean attire, bowed in grief, abandoned by the whole world, crushed by misfortune as dire as it was undeserved—the wife of a felon.

No; Angelo must be saved, if not for his own sake, at least for Madeleine's. Lucien was not long in reaching this conclusion, and that very day he visited the criminal court, and ascertained when Angelo would be brought to trial.

At the end of the week the singer, more dead than alive, in dread of the terrible fate hanging over him, was called upon to prove his innocence of the crime of slaying Pietro.

As Lucien entered the court-room, his eyes fell upon Madeleine seated on one of the benches, and he shuddered at the sight—so pale, so ill-clad, so utterly wretched and forlorn she looked, sitting there alone, with the gaze of the idle crowd fixed upon her.

The hearing was brief, for the public prosecutor, with the perjured evidence of Angelo's companions, had little difficulty in making out his case. Even the proprietor of the wine shop was quite positive that it was Angelo who had dealt the fatal blow.

The man was willing to swear that he had seen Angelo draw the stiletto from his breast and raise it in the air to strike Pietro.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd of idlers and beggars which filled the wooden bench. A tall, well-formed man, with his thick white hair thrown back from his broad brow, and his clean-shaven face wearing the pallor of a sedulous scholar, approached the railing and conferred in a whisper with the attorney of the accused.

"One moment, your Honour," cried the lawyer, turning hastily about, "we have another witness for the accused."

A deathlike silence came upon the room.

"A gentleman, your Honour," continued the lawyer, "who happened to be present in the wine-shop when the murder took place will now give his evidence."

"Your name," asked the attorney, as the stranger was conducted into the witness-box.

"Lucien Barthelemy."

At these words a pallor as ashen as death's hue came over Angelo's face, and Madeleine, stark and speechless with mingled wonder and shame, sat with a stare almost of mania in her eyes.

"Let the witness be sworn upon the Holy Gospels," said the magistrate calmly, but Lucien pushed the book gently aside and shook his head. "Do you wish to make oath before God simply with uplifted hands?" inquired the magistrate.

"I am unwilling to make oath either before God or man," replied Lucien. "But I solemnly affirm that I will speak the truth."

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"Proceed," said the magistrate; "the jury may accept or reject the testimony as they see fit."

In a few words Lucien described the brawl and explained how Angelo's dagger had been wrenched from his hand by Stephano, and by him turned against Pietro: but the public prosecutor cautioned the jury that they should be careful how they allowed the testimony of an infidel to outweigh the overwhelming evidence already adduced, to say nothing of the previous ill-repute of the accused, who had on another occasion wounded a friend in a quarrel over some trivial subject.

It required but a few moments for the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty, upon hearing which Madeleine uttered a piercing cry of horror, and, throwing herself upon her knees, stretched out her hands towards the magistrate.

"Mercy, oh, mercy for him!" she pleaded, in tones that brought tears to the men's eyes, and caused the women to break out into convulsive sobbing.

"Ten years' penal servitude is the lowest penalty the law permits," said the magistrate solemnly, "but the prisoner may by good behaviour reduce the term to six years and a half."

Calling the prisoner's lawyer to him, Lucien handed him a sum of money, and, having requested him to look after Madeleine, who had been borne senseless from the court-room, he walked away.

Ten times he halted and asked himself why he should not go to Madeleine, why he should not act as her friend, her protector, her comforter. But suppose that beautiful child of the south land, now more beautiful than ever in her grief and loneliness, should throw her fair form into his arms, ask him to forgive, forget, and take her back, would he be able to withstand the terrible temptation?

True, Angelo was as good as dead to her, and a strange fate with an almost playful cruelty had again brought the beautiful creature within his grasp. Why should he not reach out for her?

But no. Had Angelo been a convicted criminal it might have been different. As it was, he had been wrongly convicted, and it was Lucien's duty to look after his rights as a man and a brother.

As Mr. Duclos announced his willingness to receive his daughter back under his roof again, Lucien dispatched his servant to conduct her thither, and then, with a sigh that came from the depth of his noble soul, he turned his face towards the home of his childhood, a delightful spot hallowed by the memory of his mother, with whose love fate seemed firmly resolved that Lucien must content himself.

"Human happiness," he murmured, "is like the scant supply of loaves and fishes. Nothing short of a miracle can make it go round and reach every hungry heart."

More than two years has gone by and no word, no sign of life, had come from the outer world to disturb this sweet serenity, Lucien felt that he had been forgotten, and rejoiced that it was so.

"Was it not all a mere carousal of the soul?" he asked himself. "Am I not slowly recovering my strength after a mad and senseless dissipation?"

Most of Lucien's visitors came to the back door; rare indeed was it that any hand was bold enough to lift the great knocker at the front door and disturb the stillness of the house. Hence it was that the figure of a woman approaching the front steps startled him one morning.

She was closely veiled. Upon reaching the steps she hesitated, turned away, and took the path leading round the house to the back door. Lucien, who had been watching her, gave a sigh of relief. But the next instant the servant threw open the door of the dining-room and the woman stood face to face with the master of the house.

"Well, madame, what may I do for you?"

For her only answer the woman lifted her veil.

"Great Heavens! Madeleine, is it you?"

"My dear master, it is I," cried the woman, throwing herself on her knees and reaching up for his hand.

"Lucien, oh Lucien," pleaded Madeleine, "father is dead. I'm all but beggared. My friends have closed their doors against me. Where should I go but to you?"

"But Angelo?" stammered Lucien.

"Is worse than dead to me," was the reply. "In a few months the truth of the murder became known, and he was pardoned, and returned to me, only to confess that he had another wife living; but I did not repulse him until the little fortune left me by my father was almost gone—thrown away by him in wild debauchery. Then I left him, and now I come to you, dear Lucien."

"Yes, yes," whispered Lucien, as he retraced a step or two and sank into a chair, "you did well, Madeleine. I'll care for you and your child—protect you——"

"No, no," exclaimed Madeleine, who, with little Alice, had followed Lucien up. "That will not be enough; that will not keep me alive. I must have more than that!" And then, as the master bountiful felt those beautiful arms once more entwined around his neck, his brain reeled for a moment, and it seemed as if joy must kill him.

When he came fully to himself that sweet erring child of the south land lay upon his breast. That autumn, when the air was sweet with the perfume of ripening fruit, Lucien and Madeleine were declared man and wife before the altar in the quaint old church across whose portal he had not passed since his mother's death.

Hundreds of hearts beat in joyful accord with theirs, and at last he felt the tide turning and saw the bread which he had cast upon the waters coming back to him again.

As the choir took up the glorious chant, "Veni Sanctus Spiritus," a voice of strange power and sweetness rang above all the others, so clear, so pure, so sweet, that gradually the other singers were hushed.

* * * *

Come, thou the soul's delicious guest.

Madeleine turned pale as she looked up to Lucien's face, but the smile met there chased every fear away and her great dark eyes filled with tears as she listened:

* * * *

Grant us in death to see Thy face.

And then the singer's voice trembled and died away, and he sank down gently into his chair. He was dead. Nor did the villagers think strange of it when Lucien and Madeleine made it a custom to visit his grave on the anniversaries of their wedding day and lay flowers upon it.

Julius Rutherford.

Next week a new serial story commences, entitled,

"THE WINNING OF GUNHILD;"

Or, The Vengeance of the Vikings.

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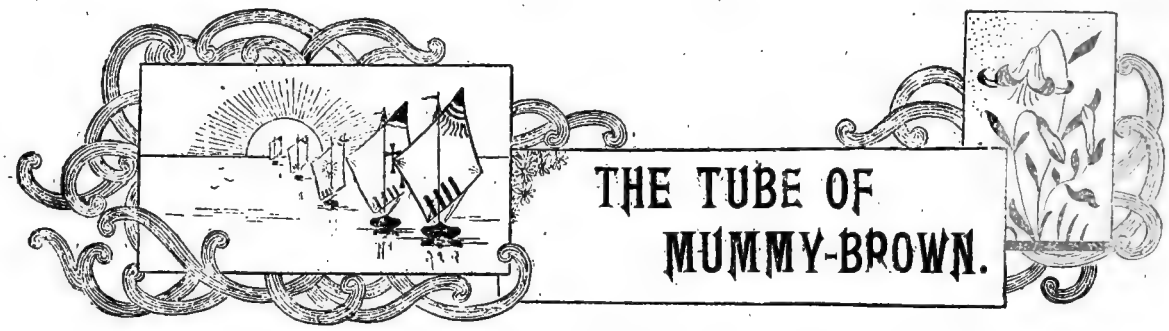

THE TUBE OF MUMMY-BROWN.

Richardson picked up the soft little cylinder and looked at it again.

"What did you call it?" he asked.

"Mummy-brown," replied Knowlton, taking a brush from between his lips to speak, and touching the canvas before him with it.

"Brown it undoubtedly is," remarked his friend; "but where does the mummy come in?"

"In the tube, my boy," returned the painter, half-closing his eyes, and putting his head on one side to observe the effect of his last stroke; "because it is made of pulverised Egyptian mummies, and it is one of the best colours we have."

Richardson put the tube back upon the much littered studio table, and whistled softly.

"Well," said he, "you may count me out if ever *I* become a painter, when it comes to using dead men's bodies to make pictures with. I'd be afraid they would come back again!"

"Nonsense," said Knowlton, laughing; "they are entirely too dead for anything of that sort, you may be sure, and if they are sensitive to feelings they never show it. Observe how I am using this tube, for instance, upon this Frenchman's coat; do you suppose any well-meaning Egyptian would like to have himself clothing a foreigner in any such manner *if* he knew it?"

"No, I suppose not. The colouring is rich, too," remarked Richardson, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets and surveying his friend's work with the eye of an uneducated critic, "though the same can't be said of the models, judging from appearances. And by the powers that be, Francis," he added suddenly, "you've made that tall fellow a very good likeness of yourself! Did you know it?"

Knowlton shrugged his shoulders. "I had an idea his face was something like mine," he answered; "but as that is a common trick of ours, I have not given it a second thought. What I am striving for is a good picture, not portraits, and I must realise something from it, too. By heavens, Richardson, it has come to be a case of dire necessity, and that's all there is to it!"

"Rent not paid?" asked his friend. "That's too bad—I've been there myself, and then it is a very uncomfortable thing to have hanging over one. As long as one can climb up and down the water-pipes, and thus avoid meeting the landlord on the stairs, life is made endurable, but with you, I suppose——"

"There isn't a water-pipe within twenty feet of my window. No, I must sell, or get out, so—the mummy-brown again, if you please!"

Richardson handed the paint to him once more, somewhat gingerly. "I can't help feeling, I'm dealing with a piece of a dead body," he said, colouring at Knowlton's pitying look; "and I should think you would do the same, believing, as you say you do, in transmigration, and re-incarnation, and all that sort of thing. Suppose, for instance, that you were painting this picture with a piece of your own father's body, when he was an Egyptian, ten thousand years ago!"

"Or, better still," returned Knowlton, squeezing a fresh supply of the paint out upon his palette, "my own old-time body, say!" As he spoke, he touched the paint with the tip of one finger, and a shiver, at the same time, passed over him, leaving him strangely pale and shaken.

"Yes, but——hello, what's wrong?" exclaimed Richardson, noticing the change in his friend's face.

"Nothing—I don't know—a touch of vertigo, that's all," returned the painter confusedly; "I—what were you saying?"

"Only that if your supposition were so, the contact of two bodies—the new and the old—would make itself felt in the new."

"Yes," said Knowlton, smiling again and returning to his work; "but I do not believe in transmigration to that extent, my dear fellow. There *is* a line, you know, that even we fanatics have to draw, and I rather imagine it is somewhere near that point in this case. But to change the subject will you be at the club to-night as usual? If Mrs. McGwiginn should happen to take it into her good old head to ask me to pay or skip out, I'll have to realise on some of my personal property, and as I don't know the best places in town, I want you to steer me round. Won't object, will you?"

"Not in the least. My services are always at your disposal, and I'll be at the club about seven or eight. And now I must tear myself away; so until then——" and the end of the sentence was lost in the slight slam of the door as he went off. The artist listened until the echo of his friend's retreating footsteps had died into the murmurous silence of the great tenement in which he lived, and then going softly to the door himself, he turned the key in it. Coming back to the table, he drew his chair close up to it, and cast a furtive glance about the unhome-like room and into the deep shadows that lurked in the cobwebby corners. Then, with compressed lips and trembling hands, he drew the palette to him and gently pressed a finger into the little daub of mummy-brown still upon it.

A cold thrill shot up his arm, shaking the very nerve-centres of his body as it did so, and making him shudder again and again, even as he sank back into the chair half-unconscious. In another moment a sudden dusk filled the room, through which the familiar pieces of furniture and draperies seemed to lose their familiarity and to take new shapes and colours unto themselves. With staring eyes he strove to pierce the mist that half

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obscured his vision, and to shake off the weird feeling that had seized upon him; but gradually the lids drooped and closed, and to his distended nostrils there came, as he lost consciousness, a faint, sweet odour which even then he recognised—the smell of cedar-pitch and myrrh.

How long the terrible dream which followed lasted he could not know; but at last he woke to life again, and, struggling to his feet, he staggered to the window, threw it open, and let the faint breath of air stirring in the courtyard far below sweep up past him and into the dark room behind. The dusk was just falling over the city, and far, far below him he could hear the tenement's inhabitants of the first and second floors preparing their evening meal, singing and cursing by turn as the preparation pleased or displeased them. The night air cooled his fevered face and refreshed him, however, and the great beads of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead were gone, as he turned back to the room again.

"I am a fool!" he exclaimed impatiently, "and hungry, I dare say. No wonder I imagine things!" and catching up the worn soft hat that lay beside his tumbled bed, he hurried out into the hall and down the weary length of stairs to the street.

But as he closed the door, a small, heavy-bladed dirk upon the shelf directly over the spot where he had hastily placed the unfinished picture and its easel, jarred by his haste, whirled slowly round until it rested upon the very edge of the shelf, where it balanced to and fro and trembled in the little breeze that still puffed in at the open window.

* * * * *

Morgan, the favourite story-teller of the Bohemian Club, was talking as Richardson and the painter came in from their journey to the pawnshop, and the usual audience of interested listeners was collected about him.

"It may or may not have been humbug," he was saying, with a shrug of his shabby genteel shoulders, "but it was queer anyway you take it. I saw the man do it five times, too, and he failed but once."

"What do you call it—hypnotism?" asked a newcomer.

"I don't know; he simply says he sensitises the water and lets you call it what you like. First he puts the tumbler of plain hydrant water into one room, and he and the subject go into another. He makes a few passes—that is where the hypnotism comes in, I suppose—and once the man is under his control, the professor walks into the other room and stands with his hands over that tumbler of water for, perhaps, a minute, not uttering a sound. Then he sends some of us into the room with the sleeping subject, and he stays with the rest of the witnesses. When everything is ready, he tells one of them to take his penknife and thrust the blade carefully into the water. He does so, and we hear a muffled scream from the other room, as if the hypnotised man had felt the stab. This was repeated three times, and every time the subject screamed and twisted about in his chair as if in agony, while the knife remained in the water. As soon as it was removed, the pain apparently ceased, and he rested quietly again. I was sceptical, of course," concluded the talkative Morgan, "and said it was all chicanery; but after seeing the thing half-a-dozen times, I felt differently, and I must say that it is extremely peculiar, if not mysterious."

"What had the subject to say for himself when he came to?" asked Richardson, who had joined the group.

"Very little, except that some one had tried to stab him, and he succeeded three times in sticking a knife into his back, he thought."

"And did he know of the tumbler of water and its bearing on his hallucination?"

"No, he had been kept in still another room when first brought to the house, and had not seen or heard of the water."

"That is rather peculiar," said Richardson, thoughtfully. "I should like to have seen it myself." As he spoke, Knowlton, who had been talking with a fellow-painter at the other side of the smoke-filled room, started across it in answer to a beckoning nod of Richardson's. He had taken only a few steps, however, before he stopped suddenly and clutched convulsively at his breast, while an inhuman shriek, shrill and piercingly loud, burst from his lips. For a second he swayed there in the silence that followed—for every man in the room had heard the scream, above the talk and laughter, and had turned to see what it meant—and then his knees bent, and he fell heavily upon the roughly carpeted floor, an insensible mass. A young physician, who had been chatting near the fireplace, hurried forward as Richardson did the same, and, kneeling at the stricken man's feet, he tore open the shirt and put his hand over the heart.

"He is quiet dead, gentlemen," he said in a moment, in answer to the inquiring looks of those collected about them. Then he got to his feet and picked the lifeless artist carefully up, not one among the number saw the queer, white mark, just over the heart that came and went again like a very old scar.

The next morning, after hurried arrangements had been made for the funeral by Knowlton's Bohemian friends, Richardson had occasion to return to the studio.

The door was locked, but with a key of his own, he let himself in without disturbing the awe-stricken Mrs. McGwiginn. The body lay upon the bed, beneath a sheet, and the early morning light drifted in with an uncanny effect. The visitor went quietly to the bed, and, turning the sheet back from the face, looked down into the still features of his dead friend. Then he covered them again and moved away. As he passed the easel, which still stood where Knowlton had last placed it in his haste, he turned deadly pale, and caught the mantel for support.

"My God!" he cried, recoiling from the painting as if it were alive, and staring down at it with horror-filled eyes. Then he hurried past it, and threw open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. A stray bit of early sunshine fought its way through the grime-covered window and crept along the door to where the easel stood; and doing so it lighted upon a bright bit of metal that caught and reflected the light into Richardson's face.

Beneath the easel, as if hiding like a common murderer from justice, was the heavy dirk, driven into the uncarpeted floor an inch. Some night wind, more boisterous than the rest, had shaken it from the shelf, and, plunging downward to the floor, it had passed directly through the painting, not an eighth of an inch from the heart of the largest figure on the canvas—the man in the brown coat.

H. P. D.

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The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

SUMMARY.

Mr. Bryant, *Manager of Middlewick Bank.*	John Warren, *Old Watchman.*
Herbert Stewart, *Cashier.*	Jack Burton, *New Watchman—a detective in disguise.*
Frank Rutherford, *Book-keeper.*	Miss Denton, *Bryant's niece, and in love with Rutherford.*
Alfred Taylor, *Detective.*	

£20,000 is stolen from the Bank one night while John Warren is asleep. The only persons apparently aware of the key to the combination lock are Mr. Bryant and Mr. Stewart. Taylor is led to suspect Frank Rutherford of having obtained the key to the lock, and shadows him. An attempt is made on the strong room by three notorious burglars—Nash, King, and Birch—who know nothing about the previous robbery. The men are all captured, and Warren saves the life of one of the policemen.

CHAPTER XI.

The Two-Ounce Bottle.

MR. BRYANT had just finished breakfast, and comfortably settled himself in his easy-chair with his paper and cigar, when the door bell rang and the servant announced that a gentleman wished to see him.

The banker was surprised when the caller was shown in to find that he was Jack Burton, his "new watchman."

"I hardly expected you. Nothing wrong, I hope, at the bank?"

"No; but I've called to give you notice that I wish to leave."

The matter was not sufficiently serious to cause the banker much anxiety, but he inquired:

"But you have only been with me as watchman for a couple of nights?"

"Yes, but I've come to the conclusion I was never intended for a watchman in a bank. I can't tempt fate any longer."

This was a curious remark, and Mr. Bryant said:

"I do not understand you."

"You remember that row I had with a gang of burglars at the last place I was at?"

"Yes; and the manner in which you acquitted yourself there was your strongest recommendation to me."

"That would have been well enough if it had been the end of the confounded business, but the burglars were after me again last night."

"What!" demanded the astounded banker.

"Your bank was broken into again last night, and we had a high time with the gang; but they made a hash of it, for once."

"Great Heavens! Tell me all about it."

Burton gave the account. He adhered in the main to the facts which have already been related, but indulged in several variations in the course of the narrative. It was necessary to do this in order to gain the end which he had in view when calling upon Mr. Bryant.

The chief difference lay in the description of the part taken by the old watchman, John Warren. This was represented as most credible. Indeed, had that individual heard what Mr. Burton said about him he would have blushed to the top of his bald head.

"You see," said the visitor, "I have picked up several hints during the evening which satisfied me that something was wrong, so I got Warren to take his old place inside the bank while I watched outside."

"You had previously told Superintendent Dixon, you say?"

"Yes; it was he who helped me to catch the third burglar who was stationed on the outside—captured here on your own premises."

"Bless me! I never heard anything of it."

"Warren did his duty like a man. Constable Morton will tell you that if it had not been for Warren the criminal with whom he struggled would have finished him."

"And Warren kept awake did he?"

"He was about the most wide-awake man those burglars ever ran against," was the hearty reply of Burton.

"I am glad to hear that. Perhaps I was a little hasty with him. Perhaps, now you have decided to leave, I will try him again."

"I really think, sir, it would be the wisest possible step under the circumstances," observed the caller, who thus secured the object of his visit. "I will tell him, if you wish, so that he may rest to-day and be fresh for this evening."

"Thank you, and at the same time you might say that I wish to see him some time to-day. So you think these safe-breakers have taken a fancy to follow you round the country?"

"What better proof could I ask than what they have given?"

"Nonsense; but if your mind is made up, I'll not try to dissuade you. I'll pay you for the time you have served, and take care that your bravery of last night is not forgotten."

"I'm obliged to you, sir, but I can't accept anything. You see, it was really only one night, as Warren, and not I, watched the bank last night."

"But what are you going to do? Do you think of returning to London at once?"

"No, sir; I wish to keep away from there until I get over my trouble a bit—you understand," said Burton dejectedly. "I think I'll stay out my week at my lodgings, while I look out for some other work."

Over and over again Mr. Bryant kept asking about the occurrence of the night before. His caller gave the minutest particulars, even to the appearance of the tools and paraphernalia left by the visitors in the bank, which had been turned over to the authorities. He took good care that Warren's interests were not forgotten in these repeated narratives.

Finally nothing remained to be told. It was not more than half-past nine when Mr. Bryant announced his intention of at once starting for the bank.

"It's strange these men should make the attempt immediately after we had suffered so serious a loss, don't you think?"

"Yes, in a way I suppose it is," replied Burton, whose manner and conversation impressed his late employer as being considerably above his station in life. "I've never known such a thing happen before, but that's no reason why it shouldn't be done."

"You think these parties had heard nothing about the robbery the other night?"

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"I should say, sir, that the attempt itself shows they had not. You could ask for no better proof than that."

Mr. Bryant had risen to go, but sat down again, his face slightly flushed.

"How many men were concerned in this?"

"Three; and we have them all."

Burton had reasons of his own for making no reference to Roberts, whom he had not seen after he had first missed Taylor.

"That's fortunate; they will get good long sentences, I hope. How will this affect the investigation of the first robbery?"

Had the caller been Mr. Taylor, the bank manager would have plied him with numerous other questions, but he cut his inquiries short as he remembered that this man was only his new watchman.

"As the two affairs have evidently nothing to do with each other, *this* cannot affect *that* in any way."

Burton purposely spoke in a louder voice than usual. He was sure he was not mistaken in believing that a faint rustle on the stairs, as of a woman's dress, was made by someone attracted by his words.

"I should hope not," said Mr. Bryant, rising, "for there, after all, is the real task before us. As you will be staying in Middlewick for a bit, I shall see you again, but now I should like to get to the bank at once."

Twenty minutes later Burton presented himself at the door of the most highly praised man in Middlewick, for the story of old Warren's pluck and bravery of the night before was now in everyone's mouth. Constable Morton's compliments, if not wholly deserved, were yet partly true, for, as he had said, nothing but Warren's interference at the critical moment had saved his life. Bates, equally good-hearted, saw a chance of benefiting the old man, and was glad to do it, especially when Burton suggested that such a course was likely to secure his old situation again. So the heavy somnolence earlier in the evening was not made known to any outsiders.

For his own part, Burton was convinced that there was something about the strange drowsiness of the old man which had not yet been explained, and it was his desire to get to the bottom of the mystery which brought him to the watchman's house.

Opening the way for what he wished to say by a number of compliments on his bravery, Burton quickly came to the point.

"Warren, only three people know that when the burglars entered the bank last night—I mean only three people besides them—you were sound asleep, and had been for a long time. Those three are Bates, Morton, and myself."

"Who told you anything about it?" asked the watchman sullenly.

"Bates and Morton. But you needn't worry, we shall keep it to ourselves; we've agreed on that. What's more I'll get your place back for you, provided you do me a favour or two."

"Mr. Burton, there isn't anything I won't do for you if you'll do that," said Warren, in a trembling voice.

"I want you to tell me how it was you went to sleep last night, almost as soon as you entered the building."

"I'm sure I don't know," was the puzzled reply.

"And then on the night of the robbery you did the same thing."

"Yes, and that's what gits over me."

"And you have never done anything like it before."

"Well now, not exactly. I can't deny that now and then, when everything was quiet and looked all right, I have dozed for a few minutes in my chair, but never anything like on them two nights."

"But you told Mr. Bryant that that had been your custom for years."

"I shouldn't have said that," remarked the watchman like a schoolboy detected in a falsehood. "I was sort of dispirited, and disgusted and——"

"And what?"

"I was afeard if I owned that that was the only night I'd slept so sound some folks would think there was an understanding between the burglars and me. That's why I made out it was a common thing with me."

"Ah! the idea wasn't a bad one; but we haven't yet got at the reason why you slept so heavily. One thing you were awake all yesterday, but surely you were not so tired that you went off to sleep almost the moment you sat down."

Presented himself at the door.

"That puzzles me, but I can't explain it."

"Warren, has anybody forbidden you to talk about the robbery the other night?"

The abrupt question served to put the old watchman on his guard. He had lost sight of Mr. Bryant's injunction that he should not allow any one to talk to him about the burglary.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed in dismay. "I forgot all about that."

He then told what the banker had said to him.

Burton laughed and replied:

"Oh, that's all right. I had a talk with Mr. Bryant this morning. You need have no fear on that point."

The old watchman was only partly satisfied. If he was to regain his former place he could not be too careful about offending his employer. At the same time he was grateful to his visitor.

"Do you drink, Warren?"

"Never have in all my life."

"How long have you suffered from rheumatism?"

"It has been getting worse for more'n two years."

"What do you do for it?"

"Nothing very much. It's old age and can't be helped, I always think."

"Have you taken any medicine?"

"Yes," was the prompt response.

"Have you tried anything new lately?"

"On the afternoon of the robbery I took a new remedy."

"Did you apply it externally or internally?"

The old man was not quite clear as to the meaning of these terms. Burton explained them.

"I took it infernally; that is, I swallered it."

"How often—that is, on the day of the robbery?"

"Once, I think it was."

"When did you take the dose?"

"During the night of the robbery, after I had gone on watch."

"Why?—was the pain worse?"

"Then was the order."

"Whose? the doctor's?"

The old watchman was growing uneasy over this sharp questioning. He did not reply. His silence was of itself

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The old man was not quite clear as to the meaning of these terms.

an answer to Burton's inquiry, who held his curiosity well in hand.

"It's all right. You have gone so far, you need not fear telling me all."

"I would really rather say nothing more about it, Mr. Burton, for it's against rules, you know."

"But you've already broken those. Remember I'm to get your place back for you."

"Well, you do that first, and then I'll tell you the rest."

"I have already done it, my friend."

The watchman looked at his caller in wondering doubt.

"I arranged it all this morning before coming here. Mr. Bryant told me I might tell you, and also that he wants to see you some time to-day."

At that moment a knock sounded at the street door. Warren had told his wife to tell anyone who called to see him that he was busy.

The murmur of voices was heard in the hall. Then his wife dismissed the visitor, and came smiling into the room where the couple were sitting.

"Mr. Bryant has just sent word that he wants you to go back to work this evening, and will see you this afternoon."

It was a lucky interruption for Burton. He quietly smiled as the pleased face of the old man was turned towards him.

"Don't you believe me now, Warren?"

"Yes, there ain't any getting over *that*."

"If it was so easy for me to persuade Mr. Bryant to give

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you another trial, it will be just as easy for me to convince him he had better not. All I've got to do is to let him know the truth about last night, and to tell him what you have already said to me about the robbery."

It was a cruel advantage to take of the old man, but Jack Burton believed the end justified the means.

"But are you going to stop on with me?" asked Warren perplexedly.

"No. I called on Mr. Bryant, as I told you, this morning, said I wished to leave, and asked him to take you back. But never mind about that. Was it the doctor who ordered you to take that medicine for the rheumatism?"

"No."

"Who was it?"

"The man who gave the bottle to me."

"Of course; he took the place of a doctor. Where is the bottle?"

"I have it in the cupboard in the other room," replied Warren hesitatingly.

"Bring it to me; if you don't, Warren, I shall have you discharged again within half-an-hour."

The host, with a helpless air, left the room. He was gone but a minute when he came back with a two-ounce bottle in his hand, but Burton noticed it was empty.

"What's become of the medicine that was in it?"

"I took it all."

"When!"

"Last night, after going into the bank. I oughter took it before that, but forgot it."

"What directions did you receive when your friend prescribed for you?"

"I was to take a good dose of it that night, about ten o'clock, and so I did."

"Did it help your rheumatism?"

"I can't say as to that, for I don't 'spose I've give it a fair trial; you see, there wasn't much of it."

Jack Burton, while continuing his questioning, twisted out the cork and applied his nose to the neck of the bottle. He was not a chemist, but he knew enough about medicine to instantly detect the odour of laudanum.

There could be no doubt but that on the night of the robbery the old watchman had been deliberately drugged, and that later the thing had been repeated, though in the latter instance Warren himself was wholly responsible.

"Since you've finished the medicine, I will keep this bottle."

The old man made a weak protest, but his visitor quieted him and put the phial in his pocket.

"Did a certain person call at the bank on the night of the robbery and give you this medicine, with orders to take a big dose and tell no one about it."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; now *who was the person?*"

The host looked his visitor straight in the face and said:

"I won't tell you his name, if I had to lose my situation again for it, Mr. Burton; I've already told you more than I oughter."

Jack Burton respected the old man's scruples too much to press him.

"Only one thing more, Warren, and I'll leave you in peace. Is this man connected with the bank?"

After a moment's pause the answer came:

"Yes; he has something to do with the bank."

"Thanks. And now good-bye and don't bother yourself about the affair. It will be all right."

The watchman seemed reassured by the words of his visitor, supplementing as they did the official notice of his restoration to his old post.

Disappointed in more than one respect, Burton went on his way thinking deeply, the only satisfaction he seemed to have gained from the interview being expressed in the muttered sentence:

"At any rate I have picked up a valuable clue from *him*."

And yet the wisest man may be mistaken.

CHAPTER XII.

What Happened at the Hotel.

Jack Burton was still confronted by the most puzzling problem that he had ever undertaken to solve.

Alfred Taylor, who had come to Middlewick to unravel the mystery of the bank robbery, was unaccountably missing. He and Burton had parted late on the previous afternoon with a full understanding of what each was to do in the impending attempt upon the institution, but, with that parting the detective had vanished as utterly as if the earth had opened and swallowed him.

Bobby Roberts, a well-known criminal from London and a member of the company engaged in the plot, was, or had been, in Middlewick on the preceding afternoon. He, too, was missing, and had never once appeared during the exciting events already recorded.

What was his part in that affair? Why had he remained in the background when he might have rendered material assistance to his confederates?

These were questions that remained to be answered.

The most discomforting conviction was that the absences of the two men were directly connected in some way, Burton could not free himself from the belief which necessarily implied the gravest peril to his friend. Though he had not an hour to spare in investigating the extraordinary proceeding was self-evident, but on the threshold he was confronted by the dread that he was powerless. The tracing out of the guilty abstractor or abstractors of the funds could wait; his province was to help the detective, or, if it should prove too late to do that, to bring home the crime of his murder to the right parties.

Uncertain of what he ought to do, Jack Burton resorted to a trifling artifice, from which he expected little, but which, as is often the case in this life, was the means of bringing about momentous results.

First, going to his lodgings, he told the old couple that he would remain with them a few days longer. He had brought a small box to Middlewick, but left the house with a commercial travelling bag. He made his way to the only hotel in the town and was assigned a room on the second floor, adjoining that which had been occupied by his friend, Taylor.

A few inquiries disclosed the fact that that gentleman's

Applied his nose to the neck of the bottle.

luggage was still in his room, but that he had not been there since six o'clock the night before.

Within the past twenty-four hours, but one new entry had been made in the visitors' book — "John O'Cane, London." Burton would have liked to have made inquiries regarding him but concluded it was imprudent to do so; opportunity was likely to present itself for seeing the individual without drawing attention to the inquiry.

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Burton had been in his room only a short time when he gained the chance for a brief stolen visit to his friend's apartment. A quick searching glance satisfied him that nothing was to be learned there and he withdrew to his own quarters.

The town, as it was to be expected, was in a ferment over the occurrences of the night before. They could not be kept from the public nor was there any reason to do so. The reporters were very keen on the matter, a number speedily arriving from town. Burton had to submit to any number of interviews, all of which he accepted good-naturedly; but after he had told the story some dozen times, skilfully keeping back a number of the most important points, he shook himself free and went directly to the Governor's office at the County Gaol whither the three prisoners had been removed.

He made his way to the only hotel in the town.

"Have they had any visitors?" he inquired.

"The whole town is eager to see them if I would permit it," replied the Governor. "Do you want to see them?"

"No. Time enough for me when I have to."

"You caught them neatly," remarked the Governor approvingly. "Who put you on their track?"

"Sometimes a word heard by chance gives an unexpected clue," replied the caller. "Good luck has much more to do with success in matters like that, than skill. So they have had no visitors?"

"Only one—a lawyer."

"Who is he? Anyone in Middlewick?"

"No, a stranger, at least to me. He is from London."

"Do you know his name?"

The custodian of the county prisoners turned to the visitors' book on the desk near him, and, after a glance, replied:

"John O'Cane."

"What time did he go?"

"He hasn't left yet. He came about an hour ago and introduced himself as a lawyer and friend of the parties. I had no reason to disbelieve him, so I called one of the warders to show him to their cells. Do you know the man?"

"I have never met a person of that name."

"I think he is off now," remarked the Governor, as the noise made by the opening and closing of the outer door penetrated his room.

Burton rose to his feet and walked to the front window of the room. The iron bars stretched across the panes on the outside did not interfere with his view of the yard and the path down which visitors walked in coming to and from the gaol.

A tall, well-dressed man was walking briskly towards the gate. Something in his figure and walk struck Burton familiarly, but he waited to gain a view of his face. This came when he reached the street. In the clear sunlight the man's countenance was fully revealed.

It was, as Burton suspected, John O'Cane was one of Mr. Roberts' numerous aliases, as indeed was the surname by which he was best known. He was the individual who had just held a consultation with the prisoners and the man who beyond question had to do with the disappearance of Mr. Taylor.

Excusing himself, Burton hurried out and reached the street while the man was yet in sight. It was not difficult, therefore, to follow him.

Up the High Street went Mr. Roberts straight to the office of the principal solicitor in Middlewick, where he remained until noon. When he came out he proceeded to the hotel and to his room.

A quarter of an hour later, Burton was in his apartment, which was upon the same floor.

Burton had undertaken a most difficult task in thus shadowing this man. While ordinarily such a duty is not ranked among the highest arts that the professional detective must master, yet circumstances often arise which place it almost beyond achievement. It will readily be seen that the present case was such a one, for the man he was shadowing was one of the shrewdest criminals of the day, who was always on the alert for his mortal enemies, the officers of the law. A single slip on Burton's part, and the whole scheme would fall to the ground.

It has been stated that before accepting the position of watchman at the Middlewick Bank, Burton had effected a number of changes in his personal appearance; indeed, few of his friends meeting him in the little country town would have suspected his identity.

But while a change of costume is easy, the transformation of one's personality is a far different matter. It can be done so as to deceive the most watchful where the light is poor and the circumstances favourable, but it may well be questioned whether the most skilful detective can conceal his identity from a pair of bright inquiring eyes under the glare of the electric light or the rays of the noonday sun.

At any rate, Jack Burton was so certain that if he met Roberts face to face during the daytime that the criminal would identify him, that he took every precaution to prevent such a meeting. He lunched privately in his own room to avoid meeting Roberts in the public dining-room. He closed and locked his door. His compartment being next to that of his friend commanded a view of the main street. He did not mean to let Roberts escape him again.

There was every prospect of a long watch, and Burton assumed a comfortable position and lighted his cigar. He was badly in need of sleep, but so overwrought that he had no fear of dropping into unconsciousness. Half-an-hour passed when his keen sense of hearing caught the sound of a cautious footstep outside in the corridor. Someone was creeping about and trying to avoid detection.

"It's Roberts," concluded the watcher. "He's up to mischief."

The catlike footsteps halted opposite his own door. Then Burton saw the handle silently turned. It went round far enough to draw the catch out of the lock. A gentle pressure followed, but the door being fastened did not yield.

A second time the effort was made with the same result, then the would-be intruder ceased. The key was in the lock, the door could not be opened without pushing it out and inserting another instrument.

Holding his handkerchief, as if by accident, so as to conceal his features, Burton watched the door. He knew it

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was Roberts who was trying the lock and he did not mean that he should gain a view of his face by any chance.

A few seconds later Roberts withdrew from the door, without perceptible noise, and while Burton was still idly wondering what his next move would be, he heard a faint sound in his friend's room.

The noise was slight, but it was as if a chair had been gently stirred.

Burton's face lighted up. He understood now what it all meant. Roberts was looking for Taylor's room and had mistaken Burton's for it. Earlier in the day the detective had taken the precaution of locking Taylor's door and taking out the key so the intruder must have opened it with a false one. Burton stepped to the wall and pressed his ear against it. He could readily hear the man stealthily moving about. The listener was indignant and felt a strong impulse to burst into the room and thrust out the intruder.

But that would have been impolitic to the last degree. It would bring the couple face to face—the very catastrophe which Burton was so anxious to avoid. Besides, Roberts could easily plead that he had made a mistake, and in justice demand what right Burton had to interfere.

Whatever the intruder's errand, it was quickly over and he withdrew. Softly opening his own door, Burton listened. The next minute the man was heard descending the stairs. There being no cause for a secrecy in this movement, it was easy to hear his footsteps.

Burton darted to his window, holding himself ready to follow the other, but minute after minute passed without anything being seen of him.

A man in Burton's position cannot restrain himself from forming theories without number respecting the one great subject in his mind. It would be useless to attempt to give those which came to him, most of them being dismissed as soon as they assumed shape. It is only necessary to say that, for the first time since he had undertaken the singular task before him, Burton began to consider the possibility that his first supposition was wrong, and that strange as was his friend's disappearance, Roberts after all had nothing to do with it. The probabilities, however, still pointed the other way, and he was determined to keep the man under supervision.

At the end of half-an-hour Burton descended the stairs, resolved to find out what had become of Roberts. He found him enjoying an after-dinner smoke, having finished which, he settled his hotel bill as though with the intention of leaving the town. He then walked leisurely to the railway station, where he purchased a ticket for London, and a quarter of an hour later saw him on his way to the Metropolis. This might be a blind, but Burton believed the man intended really going there; indeed, nothing seemed more natural than that he should do so. Instead, therefore, of following him, Burton decided to remain in Middlewick.

Burton stepped to the wall.

So critical did he consider the situation that he decided upon a step which under other circumstances nothing could have induced him to take. He went to the office of the attorney with whom Roberts had had an interview earlier in the day.

"I expected to meet my old friend, Mr. O'Cane, here," was his explanation, when he found himself in the presence of that dignitary; "but I'm afraid I've missed him."

"You must have mistaken the appointment if you had one," was the attorney's reply, as he scrutinised his visitor as though he recollected seeing him before.

"I am afraid I must have. Can you tell me where I am likely to find him?"

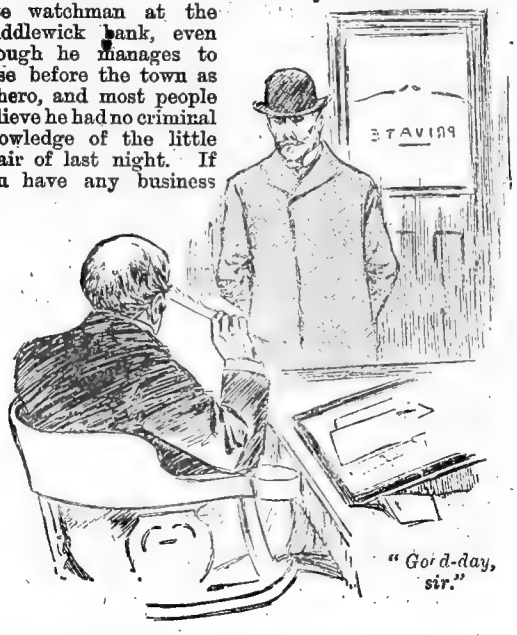
"Isn't he at the hotel?"

"No. I left there a few minutes ago and they told me he had returned to London."

"Then how do you expect to see him here?"

"I thought he might have left some message for me as to his whereabouts."

"If he had done so I would hardly communicate it to the late watchman at the Middlewick bank, even though he manages to pose before the town as a hero, and most people believe he had no criminal knowledge of the little affair of last night. If you have any business with me, sir, I refuse to listen to it, and the sooner you leave this office the better."



"Good-day, sir."

"I shall go when I wish to. A man in your position has too hard work to earn his bread-and-butter to give any consideration to the character of his clients or the justice of their cases."

"That remark is warranted by your own presence in my office, but I decline to take your case."

"It's easy to decline that which has not been offered. I have not yet fallen so low as to appeal to you for help."

"Nor I so low as to give it."

"Well?" added Burton, rising from his chair, "I wish you good luck in defending a lot of the worst criminals that ever afflicted this country. I have no doubt the task is a congenial one."

"Far better than defending one who assaults so important a person as the police superintendent."

"No doubt you will earn your fee, but your clients have less money to waste upon legal advice than they would have had had I not helped to bring their schemes to nought."

"It is not difficult for an honest man to obtain defence, while a dishonest person needs twice as much to clear himself, a fact which you would do well to bear in mind. But I must really decline to waste any more time upon you."

"And I am sorry that I have already wasted more valuable time than yours."

"Oblige me, then, by leaving."

"Good-day, sir."

The attorney made no response and Burton withdrew, feeling that in this after view at least, he had got the best of it.

(To be continued.)

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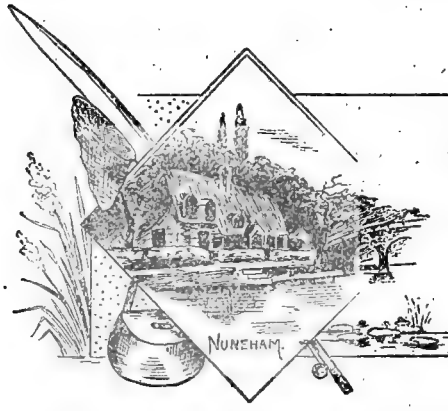
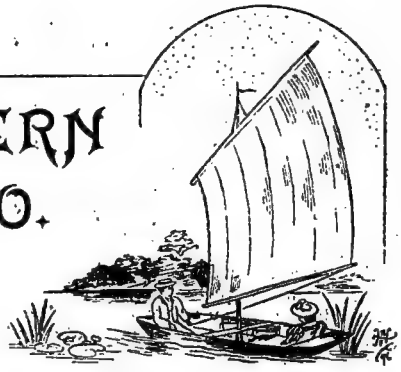


A MODERN SAPPHO.



Covent Garden Theatre was in a blaze of light, and the gaily-attired figures were gracefully keeping time to the sweet strains of Glover's magnificent band, while others were idly "sitting out" the dances, and conversing on the fashionable topics of the season.

Amongst these we see two figures partly hidden by the large palms, one, that of Rosa Bellafonce, who is admirably attired as "Sappho," her long black satin mantle lined throughout with scarlet showed off her magnificently modelled figure to perfection, her beautifully shaped head crowned with a rich wealth of golden curls, on which was daintily placed her black satin Sappho hat.

Miss Rosa Bellafonce was (so the critics said) "the queen of burlesque;" her dancing eyes and graceful easy movements—to say nothing of her beautiful figure—had taken the hearts of the general public. The second person was Lord Dewhurst—a charming boy with an effeminate face, limited vocabulary, and a magnificent banking account, which was without doubt the charm he held for Miss Bellafonce. His age (judging from his boyish countenance) might have been seventeen at most.

In reality, however, young Lord Dewhurst was just twenty. He was an awkward, blushing youth, on whose shoulders Society manners might have rested a trifle more comfortably had not his fair companion robbed him of his very limited senses.

"Shall we—ah, take a turn, Miss Rosa?" he is asking, adjusting his eyeglass, and gazing at Rosa in rapture.

"No, Dewhurst—believe me, I am far more comfortable where I am," she answered sweetly, placing her hand on his arm. Poor Bertie blushes scarlet, and endeavours to stammer a pretty speech, in which he fails hopelessly.

"By Jove, Miss Rosa," he says at last, with a great effort, "you look stunning to-night—what—ah—ripping idea to have—chosen that—costume."

"Do you think so?" laughed Rosa, rising, and glancing at herself in a long mirror, and holding out her mantle for the benefit of the bewildered Bertie, who could not find words to express his admiration.

"Come, Lord Dewhurst, let us take a turn now, my favourite waltz has just commenced."

Rosa takes the proffered arm with a playful squeeze, and they join the merry throng.

Many envious glances are cast in their direction as they glide over the polished floor, and thus run the whispers:

"Great Scot! old chappie—why, it's Rosa from the Frivolity—the queen of principal boys—and, by Jove! it's Dewhurst who is with her; he'll make a fool of himself over her. But only wait until the Earl, his grandfather, sees him. The old fellow won't like being cut out by his heir; she is a great pet of his."

"Is the old boy here to-night?" asked a *blasé*-looking fellow, with a bored, languid air.

"Yes, he is never out of an affair of this kind—a sad old dog is Earl Dewhurst."

Thus ran the chatter round the theatre as the fair actress and her youthful admirer glided through the crowd.

Bertie Dewhurst perhaps was not aware that his aristocratic grandfather was watching him keenly all the evening. There was a curious expression on his florid countenance—one of amusement and yet envy.

"Foolish boy," he mutters incessantly to himself, "I must have a word with Rosa to-night."

* * * * *

The following morning Rosa Bellafonce is fully equipped. She is admiring herself in a glass, being quite satisfied with her appearance, she seats herself in her dainty boudoir, and anxiously watches the progress of the clock.

It is nearly twelve.

The Earl Dewhurst is expected at twelve forty-five, and his grandson at twelve. Rosa fears that they should meet, if so her game would be up. "I wonder if Bertie will come?" she asks herself with a doubtful smile. "Suppose they should meet;" she gives vent to a harsh, musical laugh at the idea.

It was only a few weeks since she had been introduced to Lord Dewhurst, and on their first interview she made up her mind that she should be Lady Dewhurst.

The fact was Miss Bellafonce had already tired of the glamour of the footlights, and seated thus in a luxury of indolence she discovered that the bouquets and the chappies' admiration hardly repaid her in her efforts to please. This was evidently her opportunity. "Dolly Drinkwater married the Duke of Brentford, and Gracie Jellingham the grandson of an earl, and why not I—I'm equally good-looking as either, and a greater favourite."

Her only fear was, as she sat thinking over her well laid plans, would the blushing, awkward Bertie be as enchanted by the light of day as he had been by the glare of the footlights?

Yes, she thought he would now she had taken her boy in hand and was determined to bring him to the point.

Her meditations were disturbed by the clock chiming out the hour of twelve, to be almost immediately followed by a sharp ring of the electric bell at the hall door.

Posing herself gracefully with studied *abandon* on the satin couch, Rosa awaited the entrance of Bertie.

A neat little French maid announced the visitor, and Rosa, feigning sleepiness, closed her large blue eyes.

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Bertie stood motionless, his face aflame, nervously plucking at a huge bouquet he held clumsily in his trembling hands.

"Go—good-morning, Miss Rosa," he stammered.

"Good gracious, Lord Dewhurst! you here?"

"Yes, I told you I'd call," he answered, thrusting his presentation forward and planting it in Rosa's lap.

"Did you?—oh yes, I remember; but I naturally thought you would forget all about *me*—I mean by this morning."

"Forget *you*, Rosa, do—ah—you think—that possible?"

"Yes, of course. I think it not only possible but very probable—but how did you enjoy the ball?" she asked.

"Really—awfully jolly—'pon honour, Miss Rosa, I—ah—should have been—awfully—bored if you'd not been there though."

"Now you are joking, Lord Dewhurst; what earthly difference did I make to your enjoyment?"

"Really," continued Bertie, gaining courage, "I mean it—you know, Miss Rosa, I have done nothing but think of you"—he paused for breath—"ever since I first saw you."

"Really?"

"Ye—as, but Rosa—" slipping his arm round her waist. He was undoubtedly gaining courage, and after coughing carefully into his elaborate silk handkerchief, he continued:

"Miss Rosa—do—ah—you know what I came to say to you?"

"Can't say, dear boy," she answered sweetly.

"Don't you think that—" again he paused, and removed his arm and gazed at his turned-in toes.

"Don't I think what?" asked Rosa.

"That—eh—ah awfully jolly hop, wasn't it. By Jove!"

Rosa could hardly suppress laughing in his face.

It seemed a lame beginning but he was progressing favourably she thought.

"I believe," he continued, regaining his composure a little, "that I enjoyed the ball because you were there, Rosa."

Rosa only laughed, fearing to say anything, in case of putting a stop to his utterance altogether.

"Rosa—can't you see that I think you the cleverest girl in the world?"

She hung her head modestly for a moment, and then lifting her eyes gazed fondly at him.

That look was too much for him, he was at her feet.

"Rosa, will you be *my wife!*"

His nervousness had flown to the four winds, he seemed to see nothing but the lovely actress before him.

"But Bertie—your grandfather," she said archly.

"He will be all right—he won't mind—if he does, it will only be envy that will make him angry—but Rosa, you have not answered me."

"Do you really mean it? Are you serious?" asks Rosa.

"I swear I am, Rosa."

In another moment she was in his arms.

Rosa's brain was still working hard.

Was it worth consideration? Had Bertie spoken truly about his grandfather's adoration? The old dotard was just seventy-four, with his coffers well filled. One thing she must do—probe deeper into Bertie's monetary affairs, and see what should be her next best move. She had not mentioned to Bertie that there had been many a quiet little flirtation between Earl Dewhurst and herself in the wings at the Frivolity.

No, she thought, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," so the old adage had it. She would accept the offer which lay open to her and await further developments. Should the Earl turn up trumps, all would be well, if not—then the boy must suffer.

"Suppose, Bertie," she said, turning her face to his, "your grandfather should disinherit you. I cannot let you lose your fortune through me."

"He cannot leave me penniless, Rosa, and we could live on five hundred a year."

"Could we, though?" thought Rosa.

"Besides, Rosa, we might manage to keep this little affair quiet until I come of age, and then ——"

Just at this moment the clock struck the half hour, and Rosa started; she must rid herself of Bertie at any cost, to receive his grandfather. Turning to him she said:

"Bertie, this is so unexpected, you must give me time. Leave me now and come to-morrow for your answer."

Bertie was beside himself with excitement, and proudly left the room, overturning several small articles in his hurry.

* * * * *

Rosa Bellafonce is waiting to receive her second visitor, and busies herself in seeing that all is ready for his reception.

"Good-morning, my dear; you see I am punctual."

It is the Earl who speaks; his manner is easy, and he makes himself at home, taking the nearest seat he can find to the fascinating actress.

"I suppose you know why I asked you for this interview?" he says, gazing at Rosa.

"No, I do not," she replied with dignity.

"Well, I have heard that my grandson is about to make an ass of himself—but *I* know a trick worth two of that—and I am going to put a stop to this silly colt's gallop. Now my coffers are well filled and I am at liberty to do what I like with most of their contents—leave it to him or keep it myself. I went to the ball last night in hopes of seeing you—I mean to speak to you."

"Yes," said Rosa, "but I did see you—only for a moment."

"Well, my dear, I will cut it short. Don't you think that you would like to handle the Dewhurst fortune with those pretty little fingers?"

He took her shapely jewelled hand in his while Rosa's merry laughter rang out blithely.

"Be the Countess and let's be married to-morrow."

"Agreed," answered Rosa, and in her triumph all her pretty shyness and graceful reserve had flown.

Throwing her shapely arms round the old man's neck, she whispered:

"You dear old darling, be it as you wish. Call for me to-morrow at ten; but, dearest, only our two selves, if you love me."

"Be it as you wish, little woman; I will be punctual, don't keep me waiting," and with a hurried embrace he left her.

Again she was left alone: she hastened to scribble a note to Bertie, which ran as follows:

STUPID BOY,—By the time you receive this we shall be far away. I have changed my mind, and I think I prefer the old hand at matrimony to the new one. You see, I shall still be something to you,—Your Grandmother, ROSA DEWHURST.

Punctually at twelve Bertie Dewhurst bounded up the steps of —— Vil a and rang the bell with trembling hand. The neat handed Phyllis laughed outright as she opened the door, and handed him Rosa's note.

Hastily he tore open the dainty little envelope. His face blanched, looked blankly at the trim servant girl, and at last he managed to gasp out: "Scratched! Great Scot!—scratched!"

B. MAITLAND.

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A FINE HAUL OF FISH

From the Spanish of Don Pedro de Alarcon.

Covered with glory and with wounds in the War of the Succession and without a penny in his purse, as in those days was the case with most warriors and heroes, the noble scion of Mequinenza returned one day to his dismantled castle, to rest from the harsh fatigues of the camp and eat in peace the lentils that came with his title.

Two words let us give to the soldier and another two to his birthplace. Don Jaime de Mequinenza, baron of that name, who had fought as a captain for the interests of Louis the Fourteenth, was at that time a man of five-and-thirty years, tall, handsome, rough, brave and energetic; little lettered, but jovial and gallant to the last degree with women—particularly fond, indeed, of pretty peasants.

At the foot of this rock were a dozen cots and hovels, tenanted by the vassals of the baron, or it might rather be said by the husbandmen who tilled the few fields left to his possession. From the hamlet to the castle the road climbed by fourteen or fifteen steep terraces, above which was a moat, with its drawbridge; the moat filled by a canal or wide ditch that tapped the Ebro a league to the northward and then fell, below the fortress, in a noisy torrent back into the swelling river.

Perched on an almost inaccessible flank of the mountain, separated by this channel from the castle, and, like it, hanging above the Ebro, there was another rocky spur, crowned by a cabin and a little garden, which in that spot suggested the hanging gardens of Babylon. A heavy beam of walnut wood spanned the foaming current between the castle and the cabin, connecting these, as the drawbridge afforded communication between the castle and the hamlet.

On the lordly crag dwelt Don Jaime de Mequinenza, and on the feudal rock an eel-fisher, who had won a rich revenue from the daring thought of building his hut in that lonely and menacing spot. It had occurred to Damain, for such was the name of the fisherman, to swing from the little bridge two vast nets, through whose meshes swept the torrent, so that the teeming eels that rushed through the cutting, towards the mother waters of the Ebro, were caught here on their course back to their birthplace, and held for the land of the fisherman, who, although he had sold them at a low enough price, yet derived from this slippery source a very respectable income.

Yet for all his labour and enterprise the poor fellow could never save a cuarto. He was not a drinker, for all the cold and wet character of his business; he was not a player; his *cigarros* were of the commonest sort, and cost him the merest trifle; and for the womankind he had not so much as a passing glance, save only for Carmen.

Save only! But then, that was sufficient exception. For—oh, Carmen, Carmela, Carmelita! Here was enough to squander the revenues of an alcalde, a regidor, a prince, let alone a fisherman. For Carmen was a beauty—a Spanish blonde, think of that, ye connoisseurs!—who would have tempted Saint Anthony himself, if the grace of God should have been withdrawn from him for a moment. Such a waist! such a neck! such ankles! And Carmen knew her own good points—none better! and women of such merit as hers fall in love with themselves when they have not lovers—or when they have, for that matter—and so Carmen spent the price of all the eels in the Ebro on aprons, kerchiefs, earrings, and fallals in general, though there was not a soul to see them but her own dear self.

Damain, her husband? Oh, but he counted for nothing. What was this wretched fisher of eels?—a lout, a clown, a clod. Oh, that is quite apparent! Convinced, no doubt, of her high mission in this poor world of sorrows, Carmen every day dressed herself as if she were going to a ball or a function, and sat herself down at the door of the cabin, where she was seen by the birds, the rock-thyme, and the skies—and by naught else. Still she awaited tranquilly the moment of her destiny.

It is true that if the poor fisherman was ill-dressed, this was to give finer, better raiment to Carmen; that if the husband should labour less, to the end of sparing his hands, the wife would have worked far harder, with the result of spoiling her white ones; true, also, that those eels, which were indeed ill-smelling, paid for the sweet-scented soaps in which Carmen delighted. But who makes such observations to a woman? above all, if that woman is nineteen years old and pretty, airy, and graceful as the rainbow with its seven colours. Ah, yes! gratitude may well be a sentiment too sober for a young woman, and justice—fairness—an uncomfortable idea for a joyous imagination. These virtues are born of suffering, and Carmen was almost quite happy.

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Given these conditions, it was not at all inconsistent that the thoughts and interest of the fisherman's wife should turn to Don Jaime de Mequinenza, from the day that the news of his return to his baronial halls came to the village at the cliff's foot.

And in effect, when she set eyes upon his worship, Carmen's butterfly brain and her unloyal heart alike sung to her that this was a lord, a fine gentleman, and a hero—here was a man worthy of beauty and charm like hers.

As for the lord of the manor he was already in love with her species, and as the greater includes the less, he was undoubtedly smitten with Carmen. It was not long before they told each other, by the telegraphic code of looks and signals, their mutual and respective sentiments, but this platonic system became to both alike insupportable.

In the meantime Damain went on fishing.

Now, whether it came to pass that the people of the hamlet, failing to realise and appreciate their abject contemptibility, came to criticise the doings of the feudal master, or whether the fisherman chanced to remember that his wife was a pretty woman and Don Jaime a hot-blooded gallant, and that the castle and the cabin were not so wildly separated—there came a time when this worthy husband displayed less than his usual eagerness to make his frequent rounds of his eel-traps. He developed, also, certain rheumatic twinges in his left knee, that impaired his agility in walking, and so he hired a strapping lad whom he made his substitute in conveying the eel-baskets among the purchasers of the vicinity. This procedure of the fisherman was far from meeting with the approval of Carmen and Don Jaime.

One beautiful May evening the two spouses sat at the door of their cabin and watched the sinking sun—the same sun in those days of a century and a half since that we see now above us. That evening it was sinking as slowly and majestically as if it expected never to rise again.

Carmen and Damain, regarding that sun, whose rays dyed the horizon with a strange prophetic light, felt their very souls stirred within them. Uncultured and rude of Nature as they were, they could but feel that this was a critical hour, full of doom, of mystery, of fatality.

When the sun had set entirely, both breathed heavily as those who have completed a long and severe task.

Damain lifted his eyes to the castle, on whose topmost terrace stood the Baron of Mequinenza, whom he saluted. The lord had his eyes fixed on Carmen, who also saluted him easily. Damain stretched his rheumatic leg, and, turning to his wife, said drily: "I think my leg is well again. I feel the pangs no longer. I think I will go down to the village and stay the night there. There is a fellow owes me some money; he will be in with his pay near midnight, and I will catch him before he spends it. I will come up in the morning in time to take out the fish of to-night's fish. *Ea*, Carmelita, God be with thee."

"Good-bye, Damain," said Carmela mechanically.

They had never before parted in this way, but to both it seemed quite natural. Damain took his hat and his staff and crossed the walnut-wood bridge-way and the fosses of the castle. The sun was still gliding the peak of a distant mountain.

Twelve hours later the sun once more shone over the cabin. All the sadness and foreboding of the day before had been pure farce. There was the sun again, red and joyous as ever, climbing up the heavens as blithely as if this was his first journey there, and shedding life and movement wherever his rays reached.

As to Damain, he, like the sun, seemed in better humour than on the preceding evening, if he might be judged by the lively and frolicsome manner with which he ascended the terraces of the castle, followed by some other fishers, all singing the most villainous *jota* that had been produced in their country. They reached the drawbridge, crossed the courts of the castle, still lying in silence, and reached the plane fronting Damain's cabin.

"How loud the cascade roars!" said one of the men.

"But what has become of the bridge?" cried another.

"True for you! Look! look! it has slipped from each end! it has sunken into the cutting—it has broken!"

"But how can that be? Such a beam—so long, so well supported by its length! so heavy! and of walnut—a wood as strong as iron!"

"I shall have to buy another," said Damain, shrugging his shoulders; "but come, boys, let the bridge be, and help me with the seines before it grows later." And, taking up the thread of his interrupted song, he began with the others to draw up the eel-nets.

"The dickens! how it weighs them!" cried one of his comrades; "thou hast done well with this haul, Damaincito!"

"At the least it is ten arrobas," said another; "oh, a fine catch! unheard of!"

"I believe you!" shouted a third; "it is more likely he has caught, not eels, but the bridge of walnut wood!"

Damain only smiled without speaking.

"Do you say that net is heavy?" called one of the men, pulling on the second seine; "well, this one is not behind it. This weighs not less than twelve arrobas—all of three hundred weight."

"Oh! it's a couple of big rocks that have fallen in," said an envious-minded fellow.

Damain was gloomy, trembling, covered with a cold sweat. "So one seine weighs heavy as the other," he muttered; "oh! but it cannot be!" He stepped out of the water and slowly took his way to the cabin.

By this time the first seine was coming up to the bank, and in it appeared, truly enough, the bridge of walnut wood. Not all of it, but the half. It was not doubted that during the night the bridge had been sawed across the middle. The men who dragged it out were staring with surprise and terror; they started back with horror-stricken faces, shrieking.

At the same moment Damain appeared in the door of his cabin, with his hair on end, his eyes fixed and starting, and a look of utter stupidity, yet screaming with laughter—a laughter like a voice from Bedlam. He had found his home deserted and the couch of Carmen untouched by her since the day before. And the fishermen had seen in the net with the walnut timber the pallid face of Don Jaime.

A moment after, their frightened mates drew out the second seine, with the other half of the bridge and the body of Carmen.

"She, also?" Damain shouted; "oh! I did not look for that, though! I thought she would wait for him in the house; I never dreamt she would run to meet him! But she did, you see! She was impatient to meet her lover, and she went on the bridge to meet him. But I had been there before them. I sawed it! sawed it! sawed it! Oh! what a fine haul we have made to-day, boys. A good catch of fish is this we have made, boys!" And, shrieking, he ran and shut himself in the cabin.

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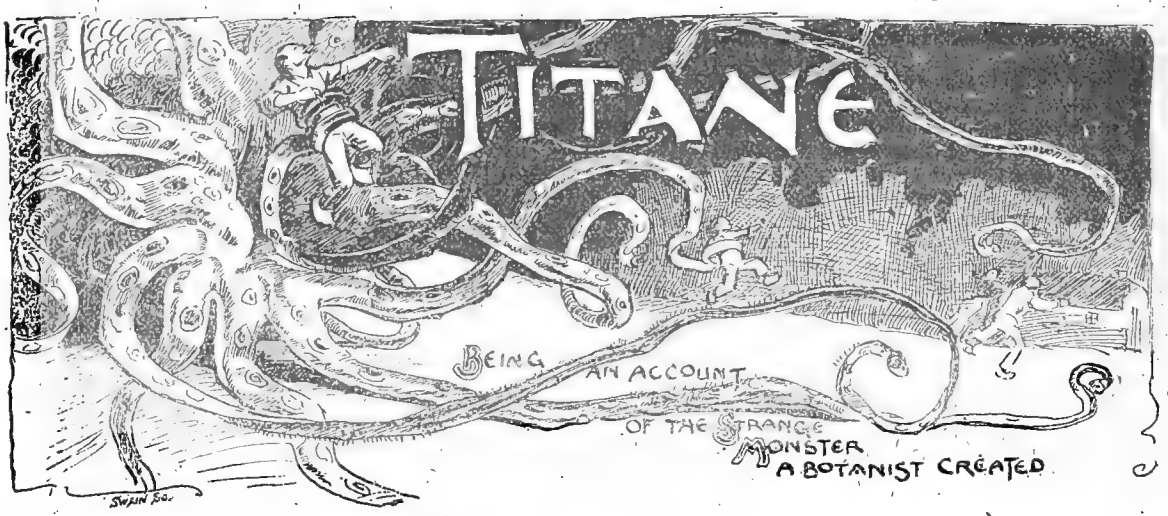

Translated from the French of Jules Lermina.

I HAD never seen her handwriting before; and yet, the instant the letter was brought to me, I knew it was from Paula, whom I had not seen for three long years, not since she had become the wife of Frederick Wertheim, the brilliant botanist whose researches had won the plaudits of the whole scientific world. Paula and I had been friends from childhood, and I had naturally expected to see her handwriting embellished with all manner of capricious little twists and curls; but I knew it was from her as soon as I saw my name on the envelope, despite the hurried, nervous letters, and I felt instinctively that something was amiss.

I broke the seal hurriedly—the sheet bore but two words "come" and her name, "Paula."

Such a request from her was to me an order. I did not hesitate a moment. Paula and her husband lived on a large estate about six miles distant from the city. But my strolls had never led me in that direction; it would have brought up dreams of my childhood that were best forgotten—but there, it does no good to sentimentalise in this fashion.

It was early autumn, and I had to urge my horse through a heavy fog. The château in which Paula lived was situated at the extremity of an avenue of chestnut trees whose boughs interlaced to form a long, dark tunnel. As I entered this avenue, it seemed to me that far in the black circle, which looked like the cave of some terrible beast, I could see the vague features of a horrid, grinning mask, shadowy as mist, which menaced me and dared me to come on. The sinister impression of this hallucination was so strong that I drew rein and half stopped, leaning forward on my horse's neck to peer into the profound darkness. Then, driving the spurs into my horse's flanks, I dashed into the unknown.

I was almost thrown by the abruptness with which the horse stopped, for just before me was an iron gate, surmounted by a curiously carved head, a masterpiece of the ironworker's skill, which accounted for my strange illusion of the night before. And behind the twisted bars of the gate stood Paula, awaiting me, her rosy baby in her arms. Even in the darkness I could see that she was very pale and that her face showed signs of suffering. I jumped from the saddle, and in an instant was raising to my lips the hand she extended to me.

Arrived at the porch she stopped a moment as if listening. She could have heard nothing, for she slowly opened the heavy door, which swung silently to disclose a heavily carpeted hall. And a moment later we were in a small reception room, lighted by candles which threw a fitful gleam upon our faces.

"Listen."

They were the first words she had pronounced, and the sad tones of her voice told me she had suffered deeply.

"I have summoned you," she went on; "you are the friend of my childhood. The bond between us has been strained, but it is not broken. Three years ago I became Frederick's wife. As a child I had thought of him, whom they already called professor, as a being whom none might disobey; he won me with a word, his glance held me, and I felt myself conquered by his will. My weakness leant upon his strength. I was proud to bow before this will that seemed to dominate all things. I speak of these matters because it is necessary that you should understand all, for I have sore need of your help."

"Why, what is the matter? Does Frederick dare——"

"Frederick is goodness itself, he loves me—but, I am afraid, I fear—I fear him above all things. Why? Oh, if I could but tell you! if I could but know myself! But this fear which torments me every day, and every night still more, is the more poignant because it is inexplicable!"

"Bah! Terror, fear—these are mere words," said I lightly, though I was far from feeling at ease.

"Words which sound in our brains, nevertheless, which are intelligible to our reason, which awake dread echoes. Why do you smile? Do you not know that mystery is stronger than reason, that from it arises the anguish of the unknown?"

In spite of myself, in spite of my wish to appear

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sceptical, I felt most unpleasantly disturbed. Lowering my voice, I interrogated her in a gentler tone. This is what she told me: For six months past, that is to say since the birth of her child, Frederick, who, until then had held his head high, like a soldier who feels his victory near, had all at once grown nervous. Of what problem was he seeking the solution? What combat had he dared to undertake? He became morbidly silent, and replied to his wife's questions only with haggard looks, as if he begged her not to arouse some distressing memory. For days and nights he remained shut up in a hot-house which he had had constructed at great expense in the park.

Weeks passed without his appearing at the château. Sometimes, in the night, he would creep silently into his wife's chamber. She had watched him while he believed her to be sleeping. She had seen him seated on a lounge, with fixed eyes staring at some fearful object. There was in his contracted face an expression of indescribable horror. His face shook, and his hands, agitated in a convulsive movement, seemed to repulse some invisible enemy. Then—oh, she had studied him carefully in those brief moments—he had looked up with an imperious triumphant resolution. Springing up suddenly, he had fled. Paula had flown to the window, she had seen him hurry towards the hot-house, where the lights flared always from dusk to dawn like a light-house.

Frankly and boldly she had questioned him. What was going on down there in the park? Why did he so obstinately refuse to let anyone enter the hot-house?

With a shudder he had coldly put her aside unanswered.

Then, brave hypocrite that she was, she had tried to fathom the truth. And she had learned a strange thing. Each day Frederick made the gardener buy many pounds of fresh meat, and himself carried them in the evening to the hot-house. What could he be nourishing there? Was it some dangerous, unknown animal that he was compelled to feed, a creature with which he was resigned to live alone for some scientific purpose? And what was that struggle, to which his rebellions in the night bore witness.

Was he mad? That thought had pierced the stricken heart of Paula like a dagger. She dared not question him more, as she saw anguish bring wrinkles to his face; and, too, he avoided her. He came no more, as had been his wont, to chat with her in the intervals of his work. Sometimes, however, she saw him, haggard and bare-headed, striding up and down the paths, wringing his hands, and ever and anon casting nervous glances towards the hot-house.

At last—and this was the last torment—one night, while she slept, he had come, with his noiseless tread into her chamber. She had felt that he was there, and she had suddenly opened her eyes. Frederick, standing there motionless, glared at his child's cradle with the hungry eyes of a madman, and his hands contracted as in supplication.

"Frederick! Frederick! What are you doing here at this hour!"

He had muttered a brutal imprecation, and again had fled!

This is what Paula told me, as she spoke, I felt a reassuring sense of relief descend upon my heart. What was it, after all—a mere state of morbidness brought on by excessive work. I had been Frederick's pupil and friend for years, and I had often listened with wonder at the boldness of the hypotheses he launched into when warmed up on one of his favourite topics. Was I not a physician, and did I not recognise the madness of fever when I was brought face to face with it? So thinking, I reasoned with myself, and, sure of my eloquence and the power of reason, I went out into the park in search of Frederick.

Night had fallen, and the pathways were but dimly lighted by the stars. Presently I saw the hot-house of which Paula had spoken. It was large and well-built, surmounted with a Mauresque dome. The lights inside were not yet lit, but the stars glinted brightly on the curved glass panes.

So therein lay the mystery. I almost laughed aloud as I thought of Paula's childish fears.

As I stood taking in the details of the structure, a hurried step grated on the gravelled path. Turning sharply about, I saw, or rather divined, in the deep shadow of the trees, Frederick Wertheim.

Haggard and bare-headed, striding up and down the paths.

"Frederick," said I boldly, "do you not recognise me?"

He stopped abruptly.

"Frederick," I continued, "it is I," and I held out my hand, surprised not to feel his own.

Then guided, as it seemed to me, rather by the sound of my voice than by his eyes, he leant forward, and, in a harsh, cracked voice, which sounded like the breaking of a branch, he said:

"You! What do you want? Leave me!"

"What! Is this the way you receive me after so long a separation? Have you forgotten our old friendship?"

He was undecided, wavering where he stood. I noticed, for the first time, that he carried on his arm a basket, which seemed to be quite heavy.

"I cannot stop," he said, "let me pass."

"Why, certainly you can pass," I replied; "but you will not prevent me, I suppose, from following you. I want to have an old-time chat with you."

He chuckled in an uncanny fashion.

"You would follow me? Bah!"

"On my soul, professor, this glass palace must conceal some treasure of which you are very jealous."

With his free hand he seized my arm, and, as I kept silent, he leant forward as one who listens. I seemed to make out some faint, singular sound, something like the gliding of a reptile through the grass.

"She is waiting for me!" he cried, in a tone in which I could detect an ill-suppressed terror; "I must go."

"Well, if you must go, let us go together."

He seemed to hesitate still. Then, with a determined gesture, he muttered: "Come, then; even you could defend me, if by any chance——"

He did not complete the sentence. But as his hand glided over mine, I felt that it was cold as ice.

He led me now. We arrived before the door of the hot-house. He drew a key from his pocket, and turned

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it in the lock; and, as I stepped forward, seeing nothing about me in the darkness, he drew me back with sudden violence.

"On your life," he whispered, "do not move."

In spite of my assurance, I felt a vague, unreasoning dread seize upon me. Again I heard that strange rustling which had struck me before, it was a gentle, gliding sound, such as is made by a paper slipping across a marble floor.

All at once, I knew not how, Frederick caused a glaring, blinding light to illuminate the hot-house, and—horrified, my hair standing upon my head, I fell back against the door, my hands clutching its iron bars!

In the centre of the room, in the midst of an endless variety of fantastically formed plants, a being, a nightmare, a horror arose before my eyes; a hydra, a polyp—a thing no man could name.

It had the shape of a colossal gourd, and from its surface innumerable arms reached out, with glaucous bulbs, like eyes, at the end of each. The inner body seemed green, the arms were of reddish purple, and, as they spread out to those ghoulish eyes, the blood-red seemed to blend and mingle to the greenness of a putrescent corpse.

My eyes closed involuntarily, and I felt a terrible griping at my heart; and still I heard that gliding sound, which I divined came from those arms as they reached forth and contracted within themselves again incessantly.

At last, surprised that I had not been seized by this hideous and monstrous thing, I mustered up strength to look at it. Frederick, who was now as pale as death, had taken from the basket a piece of meat, and, with infinite precautions, balancing gingerly on the tips of his toes, as if he feared lest his hand be touched by those horrible tentacles, he placed the raw morsel on the extremity of a cluster of those waving arms. And suddenly, as if they were of elastic, the arms drew in upon themselves, dragging the meat, which was thus brought to the shorter arms, which I now saw composed an inner circle. And all the arms bent towards the centre, till I could no longer see the meat.

Shuddering and sick at heart, I glanced at Frederick. His forehead was covered with perspiration, his teeth chattered—the demoniac brute was motionless now, ravenous over its monstrous deglutition.

"She eats, Titane eats!" he whispered.

"Titane?" I repeated after him stupidly.

"You do not know, you do not understand! Do you not recognise her? Now, look, she is tamed—" and all at once I comprehended, I saw that "Titane" was this monstrous beast.

"For nearly an hour she will be this way," said Frederick; "ah, I know why you have come! They think me mad! But it is not true—mad, I—I, who by a miracle of perseverance, by a master-work of selection, have developed the insectivorous plant *Drosera* to this formidable size. You will see it, this monster, hold out its tentacles to me in an instant empty—and I must nourish it, I must feed it, or—" He glanced about him apprehensively.

"Or?" I repeated.

"Listen," said he; "you shall know my secret. You know with what ardour I followed the discoveries of Nitschke, Warming and Darwin in the study of those strange plants that are intermediate between the vegetable and animal worlds, which entrap insects, seize them, and feed upon them, slowly absorbing and sucking nourishment from them. I was sure of the results of these strange studies, I did not doubt the end for an instant, and I said to myself that the *Drosera*, the *Dionœa*, the *Drosophyllum* are—listen to me well now—the degenerate posterity of monstrous animals, whose terrible forms have remained to us in the legends of the most primitive peoples. Hydras, chimeras, krakens, dragons—all have existed, the human imagination has created nothing.

"But by climatic adaptations, because of geological transplantation, and through the thousand-and-one modifying forces of nature, these formidable beings, deprived of the nourishment that was necessary to them, have retrogressed, by a kind of inverted atavism, into the vegetable form, have become immovable, attached

"Assassin! You have killed Titane!"

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to the soil by roots. They were compelled to seek their chief nourishment directly from the earth itself, and they have become plants again, preserving only the supreme aptitude, sole vestige of their lost life, the faculty of animal nutrition.

"I determined to reconstitute this atropic genus; I determined that I would change the plant back into the beast. Ah, how many attempts have failed. At length chance—all our science is but the child of chance—placed in my hands a *Drosera* of exceptional size. I have nourished her, and I have developed within her the remnants of the animal juices. Little by little she has evolved and grown, until at last, the acme of deduction, the hydra, the dragon, lives again! Behold my Titane—enormous and sublime! Behold her, ferocious in the hunger that I cannot sate!"

And as two tentacles separated themselves from the mass and waved softly in the air, with a hideous, ceaseless motion, he gently laid upon them a fresh piece of flesh.

"But you do not know all," he continued, in a low tone; "if Titane should be very hungry—I did not foresee this—in her present condition of ferocious power, she would tear herself from the place to which her now enfeebled roots bind her; and then, a terrible and all-powerful brute, she would drag her slimy and enormous bulk out into the world where there are men and women, and little children—and what has been my triumph would be my crime.

"I fear that she may escape some day, and lest she become hungry, I watch her every hour, night and day. Were I once but a few minutes late, and I *know* that she would hurl herself upon the world, menacing my wife and child, whom she would first encounter. Let her eat, let her eat, for she must not wish to move from here."

And again he tossed down great masses of meat. And through the fibres of this horrible plant passed purple tides of the extracted blood.

At this moment, as I stood speechless, overwhelmed with the intensity of my revulsion, the barred door, which I had not securely shut, swung softly open, and Paula appeared.

Her courage had been stronger than her fear. Now that she knew I was there, she had had the boldness to violate the secrecy of this chamber of horrors.

"Frederick!" she cried.

But to her call a blood-curdling shriek responded. In his surprise at her sudden appearance, Frederick had ecoiled a step, and forgetful of his danger, touched with is hand the monster's tentacles. With lightning aidity all the hideous trumpet-mouths had seized upon the hand, grasping the wrist, the forearm! Oh, horror! I saw it drawn down by that resistless suction. I seized him about the body, straining every muscle to draw him from the embrace of the terrible Titane—but the brute was stronger than I.

Then my eyes fell upon an axe in the corner.

"The trunk! the trunk!" I cried to Paula; "cut it, hack it!"

Weak as she was from fright, she seized the axe and swung its shining blade and struck one blow that cut through the very roots of the plant. It seemed to make an effort to rise, to hurl itself at us, and then, powerless, suddenly collapsed with a flaccid sound like wet linen, and at the same time I pulled the unfortunate Frederick loose from the relaxed tentacles.

Paula caught him in her arms. He opened his eyes, and, in a last spasm, fixed them on me as he said: "Assassin! you have killed Titane!"

And he fell back dead.

GLANCE AT THIS.

The following is a list of some of the authors and artists who have contributed to PEARSON'S MAGAZINE for April:

THE MARQUIS OF LORNE, K.T.
SIR EVELYN WOOD.
RUDYARD KIPLING.
SIR WALTER BESANT.
ARCHIBALD FORBES.
IAN MACLAREN.
STANLEY L. WOOD.
G. G. MANTON.
GEORGE ASHTON.
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R. SAUBER, R.B.A.
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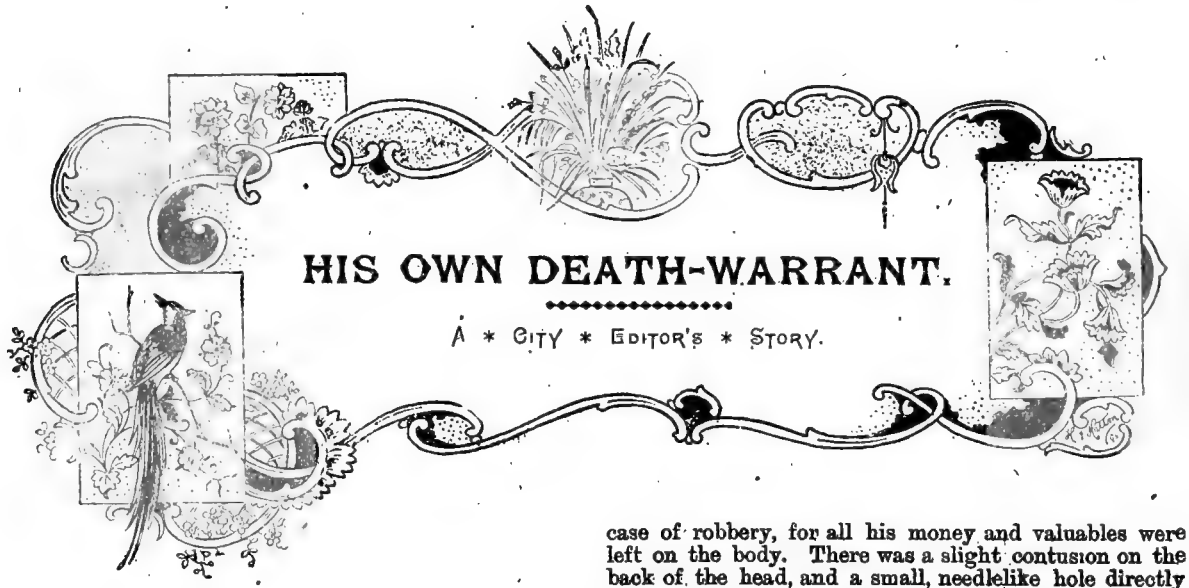

HIS OWN DEATH-WARRANT.

A * City * Editor's * Story.

"It was in a provincial town, some years ago," remarked the City editor, "that I was on the staff of a morning paper. We had a man on the paper who was simply a crank on homicides; and he was more than a mere reporter, for he had detective talent of the highest order. He didn't care much for the common crimes—burglaries, larcenies and the like—but give him a startling, mysterious murder, and he was splendid. Not only did he have the history of all the famous murders at his fingers' ends, but he delighted in ferreting out the most mysterious crimes that came within our province. In every case, except the one I am telling about, he traced the murderer before the detectives ever dreamt of his identity.

"I have since thought the secret of his success was that he put himself mentally in the place of the murderer, and reasoned it out from motives rather than from the clue of the ordinary detective.

"'There is seldom much method,' he once said to me, when in a communicative mood; 'most men would commit it in about the same way under the same circumstances. It is only when a murderer goes about it systematically, as do the Thugs of India, that a murder becomes truly mysterious.'

"I once asked him why he did not become a regular detective.

"'I was born and bred a newspaper man,' he said, 'and habit is too strong to break.' That was literally true in his case, otherwise I might not have to tell this story.

"One morning, the body of a fine-looking man was found in an alley adjoining some electric-light works, in the very heart of the town. The evening papers had a few words on it, but didn't make much out of it, so I at once assigned it to Jones—as we will call him. Although he did not turn up at the usual hour, I had no doubt that he was already at work on it, as it was as mysterious a case as even he could desire.

"The victim was identified as a commercial traveller, who had just arrived, and, as far as was known, he had no friends or acquaintances in the town. It was not a case of robbery, for all his money and valuables were left on the body. There was a slight contusion on the back of the head, and a small, needlelike hole directly through the man's heart. It was especially strange that such a crime should have been committed in a public thoroughfare, while there was absolutely no clue to the murderer or his motive.

"But these difficulties were only such as would ordinarily put Jones on his mettle, so I did not doubt that he would have a good account of the affair. I was therefore somewhat surprised when he came in about six o'clock in the evening to hear that he knew nothing about it. He looked worn and haggard, but denied that he was ill, so I gave him an account of the murder. I thought I saw a startled look in his eyes, but he maintained his outward composure and went out without a word.

"I did not see him again that evening. About midnight I began to wonder why I had not heard from him, but only speculated on the possibility of something having happened to him, for the idea that he could possibly fail never occurred to me. Finally, after an hour had gone by, I sent a message to the police station. Word came back that there were no new developments in the case, and that Jones had not been there. Sending two men out to hunt him up, I set to work myself to make up a story of the murder from the evening papers. Just then Jones came in. His step was unsteady and his face flushed. He had evidently been drinking heavily—something I never knew him to do before—but he was quite sober; he seemed at a high nervous tension, although outwardly as calm as ever.

"I decided to let this breach of discipline pass, and merely asked him for his story of the murder. He replied that he hadn't written it.

"'Well, get to work at once,' I said, rather sharply.

"Then he surprised me by saying that he had nothing to write beyond the bare facts already known. The police had developed nothing new, and he supposed that I had worked up the story from the evening papers.

"'And has it come to pass that you wait for the police to develop a murder case for you?' I exclaimed angrily. 'As for the reports in the evening papers, you can make up a better story than they had!'

"He sat down, in apparent despair, at his desk.

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Then I relented and cajoled him a little, begging him not to spoil his great record by falling down on such a case as this. 'There's a starter for you,' said I, throwing him the article I had commenced. 'Now go ahead and fill that out with a column description of the scene.'

"'I haven't even visited it,' he replied. Nevertheless, he picked up the pages and read them as if impelled by some hateful fascination. Then he took up his pen to make a few minor corrections. For some time he sat quite still, thinking deeply. Then as if totally oblivious of my presence, he began to write.

"As sheet after sheet fell from under his fingers, I snatched them up, read them hurriedly, and shot them into the 'copy' tube to the composing room. I read rapidly, as an editor will, taking but small account of the matter so long as it ran smoothly, while I had too much confidence in him to question the accuracy of his statements. I only realised that he was writing a great story—the greatest he had ever done. He seemed inspired with the very innermost thoughts of the murderer, and under his touch every trivial incident came out with distinctness and coherency that made the cause and method of the crime perfectly plain.

"First he described the scene with accuracy of detail that would have been impossible for one who had not studied it closely. The selection of the spot, he explained, by the fact that the bright electric light, streaming through the windows, made it impossible for the passers-by to see into the shadows. Thus, while impenetrable darkness screened the assassin, ample light guided his blow, and, moreover, the rattle and roar of the machinery near by drowned all sound of the struggle.

"'The blow on the head,' he demonstrated, must have been from a loaded stick, while the wound through the heart could only have been made by one of those long, fine-bladed stilettos of Italian make. Furthermore, the fact that this peculiar weapon was driven home with a firm hand, after the victim had been stunned by a blow on the head, indicated premeditated and deliberate murder, while the theory of robbery was disproved by the fact that the man's valuables had been untouched. The only tenable theory, therefore, was that the motive of the murder was revenge.

"Altogether, a more masterly analysis of a case I never read, but here he branched off into what I at first supposed to be purely imaginary speculations as to the wrong which had led the murderer to seek the life of the unknown man. These seemed purposely vague at first, but gathered in strength and certainty, until I concluded that he must have some good foundation for them. Starting with hypotheses, he soon began to state them as facts. He described how the dead man, a once trusted friend, had entered the home of another; how, by subtle wiles and deceit, he had stolen the love of the wife; then followed an elopement and the breaking up of that once happy home.

"He told with the bitterness of truth how the scoundrel had deserted the weak and erring woman and left her to perish alone; how the idea of revenge had filled the mind of the wronged husband; how, himself unseen, he had followed every movement of the intended victim for months, and carefully plotted his destruction; how he had decoyed the doomed man to the town, and to the very spot where the murder was committed; how he had destroyed the only clues—two letters in the pockets of the dead man—and finally made his own escape, the secret safe in his own heart.

"As I read this remarkable story through, the conviction forced itself upon me that this was the absolute truth. If the writer himself had committed the deed, he could not have described it more graphically. Suddenly the thought flashed over me—could he describe such a crime thus without having committed it?

"We were alone in the room. I glanced at Jones apprehensively. He was writing rapidly—fiercely. His eyes were fixed, but he seemed looking through and beyond the paper across which his pen flew, at something fascinating—terrible! When he finished, it was with a start, as if waking from a trance. I glanced at the last page. There, to my indescribable horror, I found final confirmation of my fears.

"'My God, Jones, is this true?' I managed to gasp.

"'Every word of it, as I live,' he replied firmly, but faintly.

"'Then you have written the warrant for your own arrest,' I said.

"His head dropped on his desk, but he said not a word.

"'Jones,' said I finally, shaking him by the shoulder to make him understand my meaning, 'enough to hang you is already in type; in a few hours the papers will be published; an hour later the police will be after you! Go—make the most of your start!'"

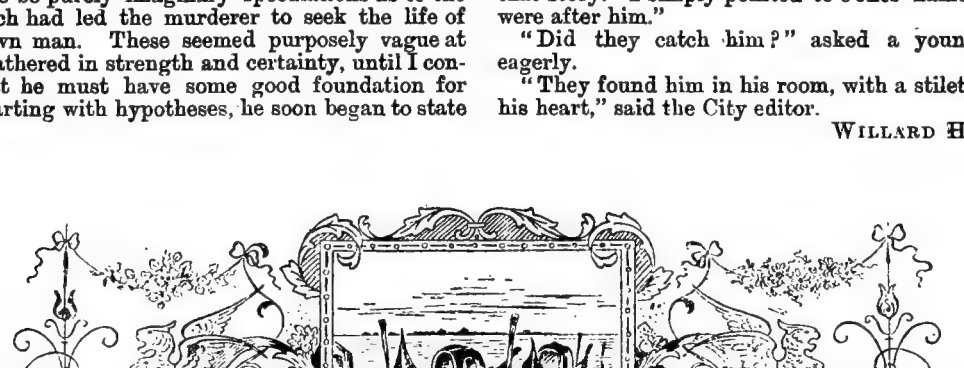
* * * * *

"It was as I predicted," said the City editor, after a pause. "Before the paper had been published an hour, a detective called on me to ascertain the source of that story. I simply pointed to Jones' name, and they were after him."

"Did they catch him?" asked a young reporter eagerly.

"They found him in his room, with a stiletto through his heart," said the City editor.

Willard Holcomb.



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THE PORTRAIT.

From the French of Armand Silvestre.

You will look in vain for a painting by Cascamille in this year's Salon; in fact it is extremely probable that he will never exhibit again, for that misadventure of last year will not be forgotten for many a long day.

Cascamille is an artistic mediocrity; that is the plain truth. The only thing he is any good at is the painting of cattle, sheep, and pigs; when he attempts anything else, he fails miserably. But he *is* good at drawing those animals. For instance, when he executes a study of a young bull, the little hard excrescences (where the horns will presently appear) are so real that you almost fancy you can see the horns growing; and the damp nose is so natural that when you put your finger on the canvas you quite expect to find it wet.

But that is the extent of his ability. Only once did he paint a portrait; he succeeded in persuading the deputy for the district to give him sittings. The portrait was exhibited in the Salon through the influence of some friends; but everybody who looked at it declared that he had introduced so much of the animal into the features that they expected to hear the portrait bellow like a bull!

Madame Cascamille is also an artist, her husband having taught her all he knew. But, unlike her spouse, Madame has a perfect mania for painting the human form divine. Cascamille has the utmost confidence in his wife's artistic capabilities and believes—and says it, too—that her *forte* is heads.

Of course, Madame Cascamille was anxious to be "hung," and she and her husband tried to get some celebrity to sit for his (or her) portrait; but, after that little affair of the deputy's counterfeit presentment, celebrities fought shy of the worthy pair. They could have had nobodies by the score, but they wanted a somebody, so that all who saw the portrait would be able to judge of Madame's genius.

A few months prior to the opening of the Salon last year, Cascamille hinted that his wife was painting the portrait of a well-known personage for exhibition, but he would give no further particulars. It was generally regarded as a polite fiction, but sure enough it was announced in due course that both husband and wife were to be represented at the Salon; the former by an animal study—as usual—the latter by a portrait.

Speculation was rife among their friends (and enemies) at Marseilles as to who could have been so foolish—that was how they put it—as to give sittings, but when questioned on the subject Cascamille only chuckled contentedly and replied: "Wait and see!"

A neighbour named Mafitas, one of those men who seem to have friends everywhere and get to know everything before other people, managed to get an advance proof of the particular page of the catalogue, but this was of no use. For all the information it contained was: "No. 69. A Portrait by Madame Cascamille," and "No. 100. An Animal Study by J. Cascamille."

Mafitas, who, although professing friendship, had a grudge against the artistic couple, determined to pay it off; with this object he left for Paris a good fortnight earlier than usual.

Varnishing day arrived. The Cascamilles were in Paris for the season, as were many of their friends from Marseilles. These latter, with Cascamille's artistic and other friends in Paris, flocked to the Salon. Madame Cascamille was indisposed—nervous excitement, no doubt—but Cascamille was there, and on exceptionally good terms with himself and everybody else. The long-kept secret would soon be known; therefore, Cascamille thought he might as well tell his friends as they arrived and thus enjoy the pleasure of watching their faces as they heard whose portrait it was. The happy man thought it was a grand triumph and was as proud as a peacock.

"How do you do?" was his salutation. "Go and look at No. 69; my wife's portrait of *me!*" And he drew himself up to his full height—five feet two—with the air of an Alexander.

He waited for each group to come out, in order to receive their congratulations on his wife's behalf.

"Splendid!" exclaimed a lady friend who was the first to pass out. "*So* lifelike."

Cascamille beamed with delight.

"Never saw anything so natural!" was the verdict of a neighbour from Marseilles. "Only a wife could have done the thing so naturally!"

And so it went on. At length it began to dawn upon Cascamille that the compliments were rather overdone. Just then up came the last of his friends.

"Cascamille, my boy," he said, slapping the artist on the back, "it's like looking at you. I could almost hear you grunt!"

Without waiting to reply, the artist rushed into the room to look at No. 69. Horror! Some rascal had changed the tickets bearing the numbers, and, to his dismay, he found that No. 69 was his own study of a full-grown pig, while his portrait was No. 100, "An Animal Study!"

The Cascamilles do not live at Marseilles now.

Geo Day.

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WHEN THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING.

By Winifred Graham. *Author of "Through the Valley," "Six First-Class Passengers," etc.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

No footstep stirred—the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me. (Oh, Heaven! Oh, God!)

The following morning Eleanor, her face bright with smiles, kisses Carol as she bids him adieu.

"Shoot something nice for dinner, dear," she says, "and have a good day."

She waves her hand as he trots down the hill, his slim form erect, his eyes bright and lips parted.

"I hope you won't be dull, Eleanor," he cries with a gay laugh. "Keep house till I return, and take care of yourself."

As he fades from sight she turns singing into the bungalow.

There are several duties to be attended to. Her pink muslin gown needs rearranging, and the huge bunch of crimson flowers Quamina has gathered her must be put in the drawing-room. They are bright, and will please Carol's eye.

As she places them in tall, picturesque vases, Paulina's words return with aggressive force.

The sort of woman who stays at home tending flowers! They take the pleasure from her simple task. She leaves the fallen blossoms half on a couch, half on the ground, turning from them disgusted.

Perhaps Paulina was right! Carol would find her far more of a companion if she shouldered her gun and rode off with him to the jungle; but she hates killing things.

The chase is brutal! Sport is revolting! Thus she consols herself, and sends Quamina for the muslin gown.

How tenderly Carol had kissed her when he said good-bye. How brilliant he seemed that morning!

She laughs again at the thought of his wit. Her Carol was always clever.

He has marked a passage of Spencer's in a novel Eleanor is reading; she picks it up and comes across it.

It is like a rude shock. Why has he pencilled such disagreeable lines?

Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide;
To loose good dayes that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent.

Perhaps it struck him as so strangely different to their ideal existence.

The hours do not seem long, for a "light heart goes all the day," but as afternoon wanes she is filled with expectant delight, awaiting Carol's advent. He will be naturally tired, and she draws the couch near the window, piles luxurious pillows upon it, and perches herself at the end of it, placing in readiness a loose lounging coat of yellow Tussore silk. Carol, it *is* a pretty name, she thinks, taking up his portrait and pressing it to her lips. It is in the same attitude as the one she destroyed in the railway train, upon her first meeting with Elizabeth Kachin's mother.

The faint light slants across the verandah, and falls on the yellow cushions placed for Quinton.

It creeps into the room, and sheds a halo round the striking likeness she still holds in her hand.

Eleanor gazes at the Oriental splendour, the beauties of which no utterance is capable of expressing, and indulges in visions that are pleasant and soothing, marvelling at a scene she has admired a thousand times before, and recalling memories of sweet caresses and whispered words.

Filmy shadows fall from the trees without, gradually outlining themselves upon the walls of the room, and the steps from the verandah. The hot air rises from the valley.

Eleanor breathes the tropical atmosphere and sighs. She loosens her gown at the throat, and waves an enormous palm-leaf fan leisurely backwards and forwards. The air stirs the soft hair on her forehead, cooling her brow.

She raises her eyes to the clock and smiles.

"He will soon return," she thinks. "It is growing late, and he promised to be home before nightfall."

She goes out on to the verandah, gazing down the road which leads to Mandalay.

Two or three black children are resting by a well at the foot of the hill, one squatting on the ground hugging his knees, the others standing in easy graceful attitudes, with round pitchers on their heads.

The well is beneath a huge palm. Eleanor has sometimes "wished" by it with Carol, pretending there is some mystic spell in the water.

He will pass that charmed spot as he returns, and she will stand on the steps to greet him.

Surely in all the world Carol could not have chosen a more romantic retreat in which to live and love!

The shadows deepen, they take forms, and glide from place to place, as daylight dies.

She peers into the gloom, the children go home to bed. Carol is not in sight!

The red flowers of the morning lie withered up and brown on the floor where she has left them. Carol must not be greeted by the sight of her negligence. She stoops down, and gathers them together in both hands, sweeping the dust and fallen petals into her white palm. Crossing slowly to the door, Eleanor calls Quamina.

"Take these away," she says.

Quamina looks anxiously into her face, as she relieves her young mistress of the dead blossoms.

"The Sahib is long in returning," she volunteers, with a nervous leer.

"Yes. We shall soon need a light."

"The devil will not catch him this evening; the devil is well employed," Quamina assures her. "Have no fear, lady."

"What do you mean?" asks Eleanor, a shade of anger crossing her face.

Quamina looks up proudly, delightedly.

"I have placed food and drink in the rock away from the roadside," she replies, chuckling. "He will be busy eating, and never see the Sahib riding up the path. Quamina loves the Sahib and his white lady; she will provide for the devil."

Eleanor shrugs her shoulders in sheer despair. She cannot bring this woman to reason. With a pitying smile she returns to the window, and buries her fingers in the soft silk of those yellow pillows with an almost frantic clutch. They are just like the sofa cushions at Lyndhurst. Philip, perhaps, is lounging on them now, or Erminie—he has given them to Mrs. Lane for her new drawing-room.

She kneels for a while on the lounge, and though there is no sound her lips move.

Thus she stays, directly opposite the open window, listening and looking, wondering and praying.

Can some evil have befallen him? She remembers his displeasure when she rode out to meet him that night—the man with the black mask.

There is a loud report in the room: she springs to her feet with a cry. It is only a string of her guitar which has broken, and she sinks back into the old attitude despairingly.

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Quamina is pounding rice in the kitchen. Eleanor calls to her to stop. She fancies the sound may prevent her hearing the first fall of a horse's hoofs in the distance, for the moon has not risen yet, and she cannot see far.

So she remains perfectly still, waiting for the pale light to rise in the heavens, while crowds of unutterable fancies rush through her brain—a mad disorder of thought.

She stares outwards, as one in the fetters of an awful dream.

"Why does he not come to her?"

Some well-known words recur to her brain. "The eye, like a shattered mirror, multiplies the images of its sorrow, and sees, in innumerable far-off places, the woe which is close at hand."

There is a hot and heavy vapour in the air—it seems to poison Eleanor as she inhales it in her lungs. A settled apathy pervades her spirit. For some moments she feels nothing, has not a thought—only a strange ringing in her head. The landscape before her looks desolate and terrible, an unredeemed dreariness darkens her soul like a London fog—thick, stifling.

London! The word recalls Philip, the man whose home she shattered, whose life she ruined—for Carol's sake. It was easy to deal the blow, to forget the world, to forfeit her good name when love's overpowering fascination was the bait. She can annihilate that black past in the light of Carol's smile, but when he is absent, and night is on the earth and in her heart, then the spectre rises, points his deadly finger at her quivering soul, and she realises the hideous dropping off of the veil. Her mind is a chaos of ruins. She calls to Carol in vain; only the shrill cry of some night bird through the air, and the beating of her pulses, answer that he will not come!

The gaunt form of a four-footed beast steals across the shadows she has watched so long, that she almost doubts her senses. Can it be a tiger perchance come forth from the jungle to prowl around her home?

She looks again, a thrill of horror darting through her trembling body.

The beast creeps with a soft and stealthy tread up the verandah steps—it is long and yellow.

Eleanor stares in mesmeric terror at its fiery eyes.

Then she sees it is a dog—a huge sandy mastiff, with hanging jaws, wet with foam, a great square head, and broad noiseless feet. It shambles nearer, appearing so suddenly out of the gloom that it seems to materialise before her vision. It watches her as if about to spring; she cannot remember it is not a tiger after all.

Eleanor sickens with fear, a dizzy faintness numbs her nerves, the room swims round. Her breath comes in quick gasps from a throat parched and dry as with desert sand.

She stares dumbly into its glistening eyes that look like coals of fire in the dark.

Those moments seem to be long hours; they are spells of invisible woe; this dog is perhaps a phantom, come to warn her of some ghastly peril into which Carol has fallen. Its fangs look ripe for human gore; it pants, and its breath is as the rush of a storm.

"Help!" says a low voice, calling the dog by name.

The animal turns at the sound of that word. "Help! come back." He crouches away disappointed; he would have liked to seize Eleanor by the throat if he dared.

At the sound of the man's call Eleanor does not move, nor even start, only the blood seems to dry up in her veins, her fingers twitch convulsively, her eyes roll back in her head. She can hear the heavy footfalls mounting the steps to the verandah one by one; she dares not look, for she *knows*, she *understands!*

Then a sudden idea seizes her. They are not yet face to face. If her paralysed limbs will let her she may yet escape through the room, and out behind. She can hide in the thick undergrowth, and watch her opportunity to creep down the road and warn Carol of the danger threatening their lives. He may even now be passing the well and riding up the hill to death!

She rushes blindly across the room, but that instance the heavy steps reach the verandah. Her aim is frustrated. She staggers against the wall, extending her arms aloft with a wild gesture.

The intruder stands in the open window, his dark figure framed in the line between the verandah and the interior, his face illuminated by the moon which has burst like a ghostly lamp-man over the east. She feels like one dazed in the trammels of opium. She tries to cry out, to shriek for help, but only one word breaks hoarsely from her lips with a hollow groan.

"Philip!"

The man enters the room silently, his garments are thick with dust, his coat torn as with jungle briars sharply thorned. He looks as if he had lived in the outer air, unkempt, dishevelled! Thick black hair has grown over the lower part of his face; but his eyes gleam as they meet hers while he advances, his gaze riveted on Eleanor. A fierce growl makes him turn, and his eyes fall on the lounging coat of Tussore silk lying upon yellow cushions.

"Help" has scented it, and springing with his huge paws towards the sofa, tears and rends it furiously in his heavy jaws with the savage air of a lion destroying prey.

The sight is strangely horrible to Eleanor. Her eyes start from their sockets, staring, bloodshot, fixed. Her lips are livid, her limbs stiff, she is still drawn up against the wall at bay; but for its support she would fall upon the ground.

Philip smiles. The action of the dog pleases him.

He does not notice the photograph of Carol which dropped from Eleanor's hands as she started across the room, but the heel of his dusty boot falls on the face, crushing it under the weight of his tread, scarring the features and cracking the card. He advances and stands passively before Eleanor, so close that his hot breath fans her cheek, looking at her and waiting.

The steady ticking of the clock resounds in the room; in that moment of extreme tension it deafens her.

The silence is horrible, unendurable; she struggles to break it, and her voice sounds to her own amazement perfectly natural.

"I know why you have come, Philip," she says calmly, and it seems that she has lived through this moment in some past existence, so painfully familiar are the ghastly occurrences of to-night. Perhaps it was in some shadowy dream which faded from her memory on awaking. "I know why you are here," she repeats, throwing back her head against the bamboo panelling, and stretching out her arms in the attitude of a crucified victim. "I read it in your face. But I am too young to die, too sin-stained."

"You think I have come to kill you, Eleanor?"

His words are low and hollow; they seem strangely similar to the warning growl of his huge dog. She thinks he has grown to resemble the ferocious-looking beast, or "Help," in the moonlight, appears like his master—from perpetual companionship.

But even as she looks, something of the man creeps into Philip's eyes, humanising them. The brute nature fades.

She answers his question under her breath:

"Yes, you have hunted me down to take my life."

An expression of intense pain contracts his features; she has cut him to the quick.

With a woman's sharp instinct, intensified by dread, Eleanor sees that her doom is not yet; but the thought of another burns like fire in her brain. Her own miserable thread of life, what does it matter? She holds it as nought compared with the one she loves. She would die a thousand deaths if such a sacrifice would buy him safety.

"How little you understand me!" he says at last. "It was always so."

"Why have you come?" she asks, faintly tracing the shadows that fall around him in the pallid moonlight.

He turns, as if in answer, to the scattered rags of a silken coat, some of which still hang in the mastiff's jaws; then his gaze travels through the verandah, down the zig-zag path, towards the jungle.

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Eleanor interprets the look. With a swift movement she wrenches herself from the wall against which she has seemed to be held as if by a strong magnet, crosses the room with quick and noiseless tread, fastens the folding window doors together with a click, facing Philip in defiant silence.

"You have come for him," she hisses, the hatred in her eyes gleaming forth. "You would kill—Carol."

At the mention of his name from her lips Philip starts.

"Is it not so?" she cries wildly, raising her voice, which trembles with emotion, vibrates with dread.

For the moment Philip does not reply, only his face lights up as with the glory of revenge.

Eleanor's fingers tighten on the window fastening. She clings to it for support.

A strangled cry breaks from her lips, and the half incoherent words: "My God! My God!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Oh, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below,
. . . . . a deeper woe.—E. A. Poe.

Philip pushes a chair forward as if to signify there is no need to guard the window.

The action excites Eleanor to passion.

"It is cowardly to kill," she cries through her clenched teeth.

"And if I did, what should I get in return for all he has stolen from me? Could he give me back your heart? Could he blot out the past with his blood? Should I regain the pure thing I lost, the wife I treasured, the woman I adored? Think how he shattered my life and wrecked my happiness, when he enticed you with the golden apple, that rots and decay, turning to wormwood between the lips! You were allured by the seductive cajolery, the damnable influence of a scoundrel."

Eleanor's breast heaves, she staggers forward in a frenzy.

"Stop! What you say is false. I was not 'enticed.' I went because I loved him body and soul; because existence without him was empty—impossible. If I had stayed with you, loving him, I should not have been true to myself. I should have played the traitor in my own home; the curse would have been on you and on your children. If such a thing were possible, here in this new land, my passion developed, increased ten-fold. The night and day, the light, the darkness, they hold nothing for me but this rapturous love, all that is precious, tender, sweet. I have fed on in this paradise till *you* came, like an image of death, to bring back all that is odious, hateful."

"Yes," he replies slowly, "I can believe you were happy, clinging to the prize you held so dear. Your words have not surprised me. I have listened to them so often in fancy, picturing this scene, when you and I alone should stand together and bare our souls. I expected to hear your short-lived rapture hurled at me as a shield, a fortification! I am ready to judge it, to weigh it if you will in the scales of right and wrong. Will you not continue?"

His words wither Eleanor's defence; she shrinks back into herself.

"Surely you have something more to say," with an ironical laugh, that re-echoes discordantly round the room.

She shakes her head mournfully, and drops her hands to her sides.

"Perhaps," he continues, "I was to blame. I was not in harmony with you; I failed to please."

"Oh! Philip!"

The words are a protest, rung from the bottom of her soul.

"Or I did not place sufficient confidence in you; we had 'family jars,' 'vexed questions,' 'disagreements.'"

"Philip, for pity's sake——"

He runs his fingers through the grey hair, lying moist upon his sun-bronzed brow. The crow's feet of sorrow furrow the corners of his eyes, which are stern, but not angry. They have looked for the last time on the golden season of life, now they stare at Eleanor as if reading in her face the key of the everlasting twilight that has fallen on his days.

Instinctively she cowers back, hiding her burning face in her hands, red with a flush of deepest shame.

"Don't shrink from me," he says. "It is almost incomprehensible, Eleanor, but——"

She looks up quickly.

"Ever since you left me I have had no thought but you. In life's morning you were my love, my all. I could not tear you from my heart had I wished to. But I never tried."

"Is that possible?" she gasps incredulously. "You must indeed have loved me!"

"I may be mad, but it is so. I love you now in your degradation, and misery, in spite of all!"

The confession staggers her.

"And you show it by hunting me down to destroy my happiness. You must have sought long to find me here, and now that you are successful, now that I am run to earth, what will you do?"

"What do you *think?*"

His face becomes fiendish. She watches his sinister smile.

"I have told you what I believe you capable of—you will murder him. I know it. You have no pity! The love you boast of is swallowed up in hate."

An evil flame lights his mocking eyes.

"Yes, I might spring at his throat as he comes from the jungle, I might set 'Help' upon him in the dark. He is a weak man easily unnerved. The very sight of this knife——"

"Ah!"

Philip has drawn a sharp blade of steel from his coat and flashed it in the moonlight, with a bitter groan.

He replaces it at the sight of her terror, with something of regret in his hard smile.

"What false professions!" sneers Eleanor. "You dare to speak of loving me, when you would rob me of the man in whom all my happiness lies!"

Philip winces as if suddenly recalled to facts.

"Yes, your whole future was controlled by him."

His words fill her with a vague misgiving, but she draws herself up proudly and replies:

"It is safe in Carol's keeping."

"You are sure of that?"

She bows a cold assent.

"Then listen, Eleanor." He speaks authoritatively. "Come here. Sit down."

He points to a chair, but she sinks on the edge of the sofa, too agitated to notice her proximity to the huge mastiff.

"There is need of explanation," Philip continues, never taking his eyes off her white, scared face. "It is time you understood me. You say I have 'run you to earth,' as if through this long period of separation I had been hunting you like a bloodhound, and suddenly found myself on your track. You imagine I have just discovered you."

Eleanor's lips part as if to speak, but the words are choked back in her throat. "Help" stirs his head, for the first time she sees he is at her feet.

"You recall," says Philip, "that small dog—a suspicious Irish terrier—you were given some time back?"

"What of him? How did you know?" turning her eyes wonderingly from "Help" to Philip.

"It was killed in some bushes by a wild beast, when you were riding one day with your lover."

"Yes."

He pauses.

The mastiff rises slowly, and stretches himself, as if wearied by his day's work.

Eleanor draws her skirts away from contact with his coarse hair.

She sees it all at last.

"Killed," she repeats, "and by your dog."

Her breath comes quicker, she turns and peers through the window, as if expecting something.

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"There is still more," declares Philip. "That cat's-eye ring I gave you, Eleanor—where is it?"

His voice pulses with suppressed force.

"Carol was attacked in the jungle one night——"

"By a masked fiend, who tore him from his horse, and shook him by the throat, like a cat with a mouse, then flung him aside as a scorpion too poisonous to touch—a foul thing, only fit to lie beneath a rock, hidden from the sight of man. When he rose up, his assailant had gone, like a silent ghost on that lonely road."

Philip holds his lean fingers before her eyes, and flashing on one of them gleams the greenish light of the cat's-eye gem.

Again Eleanor looks fearfully out into the night, she fancies she hears Carol on the steps below.

"While you have been basking in your 'paradise,' dreaming your short-lived vision of love, I have watched and waited, prowling to and fro with 'Help,' a faithful servant, at my heels. Your dog scented me, he proclaimed my presence, so I let 'Help' silence him once and for all. Many a night when you sat together, there in that verandah, your hand linked in his ringless fingers, your eyes feasting on his false face, I crouched below, watching. Did you never feel my nearness? Ah, you shudder! It *was* strange—very strange. It maddened me that he should wear your ring—my ring—so I wrenched it from him."

She listens like one in the thralls of a hideous nightmare. If Carol comes now—he is lost!

"Why, when I had him by the throat," asks Philip, "did I not strangle the life from his body? Why did I stay my hand? How was it I watched your happiness with hungry eyes, and did not strike? I could have shot you dead in each other's arms scores of times. I inexorably determined on his death, but held the sword suspended, like Damocles, by a single hair."

She listens acutely to his every syllable.

"Why?" she stammers feebly, her mind groping in the dark.

"So long as he was faithful to you—so long as he valued what you flung at his feet, I would not wake you from your Elysium. By this I *proved* the love you discredit. My action should not plunge you into an abyss of woe; but *now* that he is false—*false as Hell*——"

"Liar!" breaks in Eleanor hotly; "your miserable accusation is unfounded."

"Wait. When he left you for long days of 'sport,' what do you think was the nature of that chase?"

Eleanor is silent, numbed by dread and despair.

"His game—was a woman, who knew from his lips your whole history. I have seen them together for hours at a time—heard them speak—jest at your expense. But, in spite of this, she was jealous of you, and, but for a bad shot, would have taken your life that day in the jungle, when I killed her horse under her. You see I was guarding you, Eleanor. He has been scheming to go away with her; to desert you as a toy that is broken—a flower which has lost its scent."

She leaps to her feet, and flings open the window.

"You are hoodwinking me with a trumped-up story; it is not true!"

"Hear me out. He is serving you as you treated me. It is retribution. You forfeited his respect and consideration. He gave you only the brief glamour of his passion, which has died, to re-live in the smiles of 'Paulina.'"

"Philip, these lies are dastardly—cruel! You do not know what you are saying."

"You cling hard to your faith!" he retorts savagely, her staunchness to Carol awaking a fever of indignation within him. "Did I ever in the old days deserve that hard term 'liar'?"

She shakes her head. "Oh, no!"

"You are waiting for him to-night, Eleanor. He had promised, I believe, to return?"

She gazes down the slanting road.

"Yes. He is late." Then, with a sudden cry: "And when he comes—oh! Philip, I had not realised it—your revenge! What can I do to save him? Anything—I care not what! I will go and leave him—I will kill myself here before your eyes, as a ransom! You are mistaken, he is *not* false to me; any moment he may arrive. Only spare his life, for the love of Heaven!"

She falls on her knees at Philip's feet, beating the air with her hands.

He raises her gently, but firmly.

"You need not look," he says, as her terrified eyes stare out at the moonlit scene, white and ghostly. "Yesterday he wrote to the woman Paulina, making all arrangements for their flight this night. She dropped the letter in the jungle, from a satchel full of shot. It is here."

He holds out the torn envelope, with its broken seal and deadly intelligence.

Eleanor takes it mechanically—as yet she cannot believe—while the sight of the familiar handwriting sends the hot blood coursing freely once more through her brain.

She draws the closely-worded sheet from its resting-place and crosses to the light to scan the text.

Philip watches her face as it bends over the letter. He has struck a match and holds it up to illuminate that fatal message.

Every vestige of life seems to fly from her features. The page swims before her failing sight, the words become crossed and blurred. She has read enough!

Then she remembers Paulina's fingers have touched this paper, perhaps her lips, and it flutters from Eleanor's hands at the thought, falling silently between her and Philip.

"Now," he cries, "can you grasp my mission? Do you guess why I am here? There was no longer any cause for him to live." Philip throws back his coat, and she sees the shirt beneath it is splashed with blood.

He takes her icy hand and draws her towards the verandah.

"I killed him at sunset," he whispers, pointing outwards, "over there, on that far hill. When night came I bore him back to you. Now in the moonlight, down near the well, or to-morrow at dawn in the rosy glow, you will find your lover. His set face is looking up from the long grass, his last word was 'Paulina!'"

Eleanor staggers to the rails, and points towards the well.

She seems struggling to speak, but there is only a low gurgle in her throat.

Philip stands on the steps. "'Help,'" he says abruptly, calling the dog. "Come."

Together the man and beast pass like visions into the night.

* * * * *

Eleanor crouches away to the far corner of the verandah, her limbs relax, and she huddles herself in a heap on the hard ground, without a cry, without a moan.

* * * * *

Another day breaks gloriously over the East, in the first rays of sunlight Eleanor stirs. With difficulty she rises from her cramped position, a shudder runs over her frame as she walks unsteadily down the steps, in the direction of the well.

The jungle fowl on tree and ground give forth their sharp shrill cries.

The bulbul whistles sweet notes like those of a thrush.

The golden oriole with its bright yellow plumage whirrs as a flash of sunlight through the trees, and the birds at home are singing.

The End.

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N.B.—The ordinary stock sizes of the Ladies' Costumes fit figures measuring 34, 36, or 38 in. round the bust under arms, the skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. Larger or special sizes made to measure for **1s. 6d.** extra. **COLOURS: Any of the above Costumes can be supplied in Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Electric-Blue, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.** Patterns, also Fashion Sheets, of numerous other designs in Ladies' and Children's Costumes, etc., sent Post Free to any reader of *Short Stories* on application to

JOHN NOBLE LTD., BROOK STREET MILLS, MANCHESTER.

COSTUME SHOWROOMS: PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER.

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1896 PROCLAMATION.

THE "SUPER-EMINENT" PIONEER REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, the well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds.

To the Influential Readers of "SHORT STORIES" and may not appear again.

Important announcement of Gigantic Reduction in the price of our Manufactures WILL TAKE EFFECT ON SIGHT of this advertisement, and is of great importance to parties furnishing.

REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a carpet for the money. Be this so or not, we send out no Carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft.—even for **2s. 11d.**

TEST THEM. THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU. EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS (Reg.)

Sale Price **2/11** Each.

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS. This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract made with Readers of *Short Stories* only. WE WILL FORWARD DIRECT FROM THE LOOMS TO ANY ADDRESS ON RECEIPT OF AMOUNT, **A GENUINE, WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET,** THE LARGEST EVER SOLD AT THE PRICE.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our Goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double the above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, **10d.** extra.

SPECIAL OFFER—2 Carpets and 2 Rugs, 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly examine and compare these Carpets.

Hon. and Rev. T. Markham
Rev. Canon Henderson
Rev. Canon Barrett
Dean Carrington
Ven. Archdeacon of Kilmore.
Ven. Archdeacon Wright
Archdeacon of Aghadoe
Archdeacon Long
Archdeacon of Dromore, D.D.
Archdeacon of Ossory
Archdeacon of Wolseley
Rev. Canon Tate
Rev. Canon Whitford
Rev. Canon Upperton
Rev. Canon W. W. Kirby
Rev. Canon Kinsman
Canon Prothero
Rev. Dr. Nelson
Rev. Dr. Banks
Lady Clayton

THE 'QUEEN'S ROYAL' HEARTHRUGS, Registered.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE (CHANCERY DIVISION), HODGSON v. WEBB BROTHERS.—On the 18th day of July, 1890, his lordship, Mr. Justice Chitty, granted an interim injunction, restraining Messrs. Webb Brothers, of Hackney Wick, from infringing Mr. Fredk. Hodgson's Trade Mark "Eclipse," No. 93,774 (Leeds).

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 'ECLIPSE' CARPETS (Regd.)

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, in our New (Reg.) Waterlily and Persian designs, suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not Printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. An "Eclipse" Rug sent with Carpet 1/- extra.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

Kilkea Castle, Magency, co. Kildare, 7th August.

LADY EVA FITZGERALD writes: "The 'Eclipse' Carpets supplied by Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son—her ladyship is much pleased with them."

SPECIAL OFFER.—Two Carpets and Two Rugs 8/-, or Four Carpets and Four Rugs 15/6.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. Do not miss this opportunity. It may not occur again.

OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes. Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright.)

Prodigious Sale of the "PRUDENTIAL"

REVERSIBLE CARPETS (Reg.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 12 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine on one side the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian, and on the reverse the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

REDUCED SALE PRICE.

	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft.	... **4/9**	9ft. by 15ft.	... **12/6**
7½ft. by 9ft.	... **5/11**	12ft. by 12ft.	... **12/9**
9ft. by 9ft.	... **7/6**	12ft. by 13½ft.	... **14/6**
9ft. by 10½ft.	... **8/6**	12ft. by 15ft.	... **15/9**
9ft. by 12ft.	... **9/6**	12ft. by 18ft.	... **19/6**
10½ft. by 12ft.	... **11/6**	12ft. by 21ft.	... **22/6**

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

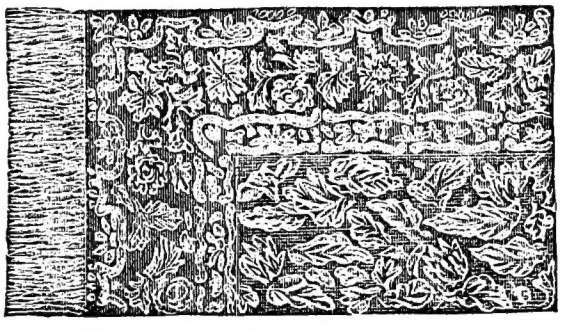
Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.

Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

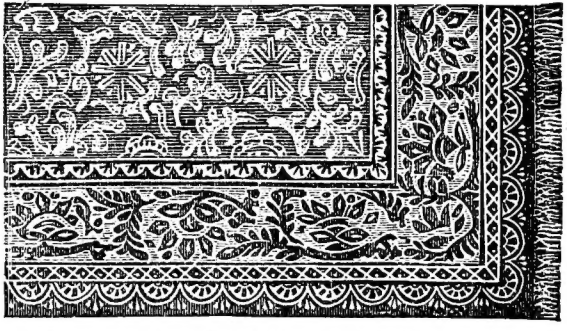
Baroness de Linden
Baroness de Penmyrie
Baroness de Rottenburg
Dow. Lady Abercrombie
Dow. Lady Aylesford
Right Hon. Lady Martin-Keane
Countess Kearney
Countess Cowley
Countess Lintzow
Countess of Westmeath
Countess of Mayo
Viscountess Torrington
Viscountess Molesworth
Viscountess of Hereford
Rev. Canon Hirst
Rev. Canon Thornton
Rev. Canon Mather
Rev. Canon Cooper
Rev. Canon Hamilton
Rev. Canon Tottenham

THE 'QUEEN'S ROYAL' CARPETS, Registered.

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yds. long and 1yd. wide. Special Offer, Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8s., or Twelve for 15/6.



P.S.—When this "Eclipse" Design (registered) is wanted in Carpets or Hearthrugs, as above, kindly quote No. 268,491.



P.S.—When this "Prudential" Design is wanted in Hearthrugs or Carpets, as above, kindly quote Registered No. 268,495.

We Rely upon Spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the Maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century. All orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. **Cheques and P.O.'s payable to**

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON, 18/4/96.
On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom.
(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.
Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, WOODSLEY RD., LEEDS.

Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS," Telephone No. 948. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates.